

CLIMATE CHANGE & COVID19

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The impacts of the Covid19 pandemic have been extensive and global, touching on almost all aspects of human activity. The long term effects on social, economic and environmental systems will be wide ranging and have both direct and in-direct impacts on Climate Change. It was well publicised that certain cities across the world recorded some of the cleanest months in terms of air pollution due to reduced travel however in contrast certain areas recycling processes were suspended.
- 1.2 At a local level, our Council has responded to the pandemic with various changes to practice and emergency actions. There has been substantial disruption or amendments to services and operational activities reflective of the various stages of the outbreak. Any change has potential to impact on our ability to meet Climate Change target obligations and officers have been considering how the past 6 months have impacted on the Council's carbon emissions. Our Climate Change Board was suspended from April to June whilst Officers were deployed on other activities relating to Covid19. This report aims to highlight some of the short term impacts Covid19 has had on our Council in terms of Climate Change.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Group agrees to:-
1. Note and reflect on the identified short term impacts that responding to Covid19 has had on Council carbon emissions and associated activity;

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 The Climate Change Environmental Action Group (CCEAG) has considered various reports in the past highlighting that the Council's overall carbon footprint is made up from a number of different component factors such as waste, transport, fossil fuel consumption and business miles. During the Covid19 outbreak many services were ceased, suspended or revised to address the health emergency. This has had a

number of direct and indirect effects on the Council's overall carbon emissions. Officers from the Climate Change Board have been asked to reflect and comment upon the impacts. Where possible evidence has been provided and forecast for the longer term impacts on Climate Change.

Waste Services

- 3.2 As reported in previous papers to the CCEAG the carbon emissions stemming from activities dealing with municipal waste account for over half of the Council's overall carbon footprint.
- 3.3 During the height of the Covid-19 emergency (i.e. from 24th March until 31st May), all 11 Household Waste Recycling Centres (also known as Civic Amenity Sites) were closed in Argyll and Bute as were all such sites throughout Scotland. This was mainly because public travel to such facilities was not deemed 'essential' plus social distancing and traffic management would have to be carefully planned at each facility prior to any re-opening. The sites re-opened on 1st June however only general waste and garden wastes were initially accepted to try and ease the backlog, then all the usual recycling items and materials were accepted from mid-June onwards.
- 3.4 Council kerbside recycling collections were also suspended on 24th March and remained so until late June when most of recycling collections recommenced. During this period as recycling collections were suspended, the general waste collection frequency was increased from 3 weekly to fortnightly. From late April, monthly kerbside collections were carried out in Kintyre by Kintyre Recycling which then moved to fortnightly when the Council returned to the normal 3 weekly general waste frequency near the end of June. Food waste collection in Helensburgh and the household glass collections on Mull and Tiree have now all re-started during August.
- 3.5 As a result of the temporary service changes the overall recycling, composting and recovery rate for the April – June 2020 quarter was 31.8% compared to 45.5% during the same quarter in the previous year. While there was a significant fall in recycling tonnages collected i.e. a reduction of circa 1,300 tonnes, there was also a slight fall in biodegradable tonnes to landfill of circa 400 tonnes compared to the same quarter in the previous year.
- 3.6 Residents with recycling were asked, if possible to store recycling at home or use public recycling banks where available although they were allowed to present recycling with mixed waste if neither of these options were possible. The reduction in recycling during the quarter was to be expected with the suspension of most recycling services although the marginal reduction in landfill tonnages was slightly unexpected.

- 3.7 The main reasons suggested for the slight landfill reduction are as follows:
- Many residents stored recycling at home until such time as Council kerbside recycling collections commenced and civic amenity sites re-opened.
 - There was a significant fall in commercial waste collected due to the fact that most businesses were closed during the April – June quarter.
 - With few visitors to the area during the quarter, this also had an impact on waste tonnages especially in the normally busy tourist areas of Argyll and Bute.
- 3.8 In summary, while the temporary changes undoubtedly had a negative impact on recycling with much reduced recycling tonnages, landfill tonnages dropped slightly, mainly due to a large reduction in commercial waste collected during the quarter which appears to have offset additional landfill from residents 'bin' waste and fewer tourist deposits.
- 3.9 With the majority of waste services having returned to 'normal' from July and more businesses have re-opened, the July – September quarterly figures will add further information to the overall impact on waste and recycling tonnages during the Pandemic

Buildings

- 3.10 During the Covid19 pandemic Property Services have played a key role in assisting services safely lockdown, manage/monitor and return from lockdown 'mothballed' buildings. This includes schools, offices, swimming pools, gyms and other facilities both on a temporary and prolonged exceptional basis. Closure of particular buildings for periods of time has contributed to a reduction in fossil fuel consumption. It is difficult to forecast the extent of the reduction given a continually evolving situation, but an estimated cost saving of 8% against annual budgets for electricity, gas, heating oil and water/waste water is currently being reported to COSLA.
- 3.11 The combination of lockdown restrictions and alternate priorities to address COVID risks has impacted on planned work-streams – in particular, the construction industry has largely shut down, excepting for essential works, and site visits to develop project solutions have been curtailed.
- 3.12 Impact on carbon footprint in the short term has been beneficial given reduced utility usage in 'mothballed buildings' during lockdown. Utility usage will however revert to normal as each additional building emerges from lockdown. A positive outcome associated with lockdown has been

the opportunity presented by continued home working solutions, which improves scope to rationalise buildings and benefit from reduced utility usage.

- 3.13 Whilst the COVID pandemic has resulted in delay to certain work-streams, it has not impacted the ability to deliver projects etc over a slightly longer time-frame, with potential for some capital slippage:
- 80no water efficiency surveys have been delayed since March 2020 but are expected to proceed during September 2020, with remediation works arising delivered within the current financial year.
 - the strategic renewables opportunity assessment of the whole Council estate, Renewable Sourcing Strategy (RSS2), was expected to start in August 2020, but is now not expected to commence till procurement solutions are concluded in October 2020.
 - A potential cluster of solar pv projects have remained at the feasibility stage since April 2020 although site visits are now being scoped for September 2020;
 - The Non-Domestic Energy Efficiency Framework (NDEEF) project for ten buildings is currently at tender stage. Expectation had been to issue the tender at the start of the financial year but framework providers are now only returning from furlough.
 - The Aqualibrium heat from sewer project has re-commenced on site following lockdown and is currently expected to be operational in 2-3 months.

Transport & Fleet

- 3.14 Business mileage by Council staff has significantly reduced by around 90% due to suspension of non-essential travel and homeworking or digital meeting culture. This situation has eased in recent weeks with site visits now sanctioned again and a limited amount of staff returning to office working. The vast majority of staff still work at home and most are still keen to continue with this arrangement at least in part. However, new sources of mileage from activities like Community Food project delivering food parcels and also additional vehicles to ensure social distancing is complied with for refuse collections. Carbon emissions from Council business miles makes up around 3% of total Carbon footprint.
- 3.15 Economic Growth team applied for Spaces for People funding to help provide alternatives to the car and enable more space for pedestrians and cyclists. They received £315k and have consulted with the public and now intend to implement a series of schemes for some of the main towns. Team also secured funding as part of the £315k for 15 cycle repair stations.

- 3.16 Fleet replacement policy has faltered slightly as majority of manufacturers were closed down. Council managed to speed up the delivery of 20 Hybrid vehicles through the Government funding scheme and these vehicles were deployed into the Community Food Delivery service. Home working has been a success with the office staff and proven that Fleet can still work efficiently out with an office environment. Vehicle manufacturers are keener to do business now as less people are buying vehicles.

Flood Schemes

- 3.17 Delays to one flood scheme due to COVID 19: For the Campbeltown Flood Protection Scheme, the ground investigation contract was stalled for four months however this has now resumed and been completed. The knock on effect is to the detailed design phase of the project which has delayed the site works – now expected to start late 2021.
- 3.18 The COVID 19 delays have also affected SEPA and their consultants in prioritisation of all the flood studies that local authorities submitted prior to the end of 2019. We should have had feedback by now advising if any additional work was required and also which flood schemes would feature in cycle 2 of the national flood strategy. So far we have received nothing.

Economic Growth, Projects & Renewables

- 3.19 In terms of renewables All Energy conference was cancelled - this is a great annual opportunity for the council and HIE to promote Argyll and Bute as a location for renewables
- 3.20 Renewable projects in construction phase were impacted, Beinn an Tuirc 3 has recommenced on site although there was a lot of nervousness amongst the community to an outside contractor coming into the area. Scotwind Launch happened during Covid lockdown and there has still been a lot of interest in regard to the W1 site off the west coast of Islay from potential developers and meetings have been held on line as opposed to in person.
- 3.21 Annual meeting of ABRA planned for sept but likely to be virtual meeting if it takes place.
- 3.22 Islay local energy project (one of Rural Growth Deal projects) moving forward to options appraisal and Wood group just appointed. Key issue is stakeholder engagement and particularly holding of community events but this can be held virtually and this is probably best given sensitivities on the islands just now.
- 3.23 Shop local campaign – secured funding for this from Scotland's Town

partnership – may not be directly relevant but will look to develop bespoke shop local marketing for a number of our towns. Currently in the process of procuring consultants.

- 3.24 Team as a whole been working from home so reduced individual carbon footprint and online training and meetings have allowed them to take part without having to travel.
- 3.25 Main impact for team has been on project delivery and effect on costs and timelines.

Housing

- 3.26 Council suspended all site based works across housing during lockdown albeit these works have now all re-started following national restrictions being lifted. A key area of work that had to be suspended was Home Energy Efficiency Programme (HEEPS) which enables insulation improvements to existing buildings. Again this work has restarted with the Government providing additional funding to expand this work working with ACHA. Essentially the programme has expanded from circa £3m to a £6m programme targeted at affordable homes and mainstream houses and managed by the Council.
- 3.27 Around £900k worth of HEEPS was put on hold and Approx. 80 working days were lost, between March and July. Programme has now resumed, with four teams back at work at a faster rate than previously. There is an aim to recover lost work by November but it is too early to tell as progress is heavily weather dependent.
- 3.28 ACHA had committed to spending £1million in the HEEPS scheme (separate to the above but still administered by the Council). By the end of June, this was for works to 135 private owners in mixed tenure blocks. This programme is in the very early phase of restarting.

Procurement

- 3.29 From a procurement perspective, as with other Services home working has increased and travel decreased during this time.
- 3.30 In addition, tendering is ongoing just now in line with the Covid guidance from the Scottish Government, which involves more Quick Quotes rather than open tenders. On that basis, as well as other tendering activity and the scope of what we are procuring, we have a high percentage of local spend over the past few months (38.4% over April-July) – this all impacts on the environment.

Education

- 3.31 A big proportion of school buildings have been closed. Hubs have run from a number of schools delivering childcare/ food distribution and the continuity of the free school meal entitlement. Hugely reduced travel (car, bus, train, ferry and plane) for pupils, staff and related services. Online digital home learning – not all - some paper based due to connectivity challenges and lack of access to IT hardware. However there will have been a significant reduction in paper and photocopying.
- 3.32 CPD for teachers and staff has had no travel. Peripatetic teaching either went online or halted – PE/ ASN Support/ Active Schools Work/ Instrumental teaching/ Arts projects amongst others.
- 3.33 Travel emissions around school locations have been limited, the good weather is helping this now too. Many families have made lifestyle changes and are walking and cycling to school, although it's unknown if this lifestyle change will be sustained.
- 3.34 Increased waste is accruing through the disposal of PPE equipment such as paper towels blue rolls, wipes and masks.
- 3.35 Many schools focused aspects of teaching and learning work on the environment and the impact of climate change during lockdown. Pupils thought about sourcing local foods, growing their own produce and repurposing household items.
- 3.36 Pupils felt that people were paying more attention to the environment and that food waste was reduced as they had time in the family to cook and think about what they were buying. They did not waste as much.

Marine Operations

- 3.37 Council Ferry Services – From April to July we operated a much-reduced ferry service. Sailings were down to 49% of normal for the 1st quarter. So, approximately 50% less fuel used. However, due to 2 m physical distancing rules, services are operating at a greater frequency than normal to ensure we can meet increased demand – figures still being collated. But, currently, fuel usage will now be greater than 100% of normal for this time of year.

Argyll & the Isles Countryside Trust (ACT)

- 3.38 ACT reduced commuting and business mileage – reduced from average 2006 miles per month (from mid-December to mid –March) for business and commuting travel, to zero miles for the 3-month period mid-March to mid-June. Based on the conversion factor of 0.26775 for CO₂e impact of medium diesel vehicles (source: UK government 2020 GHG conversion factors) they have reduced their CO₂e impact - albeit temporarily - by 1.61 tCO₂e over that period.

- 3.39 Project 'ACT Now' launched mid lockdown building on positive community networks 'one less journey' looks to embed the practice of a car journey meeting the needs of more than one household in collecting prescriptions, food, and essential goods. This scheme has been adapted from the Act Now Car Share project to promote, coordinate, and evidence change in car use behaviors.
- 3.40 However, ACT Now- physical delivery of sustainability workshops delayed. These workshops include textile repair, seasonal food preservation, upcycling, and composting, for example. Car Share scheme also delayed until circumstances around social distancing permit

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Policy:	None
4.2 Financial:	None at present
4.3 Legal:	None at present
4.4 HR:	None at present
4.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:	None at present
4.6 Equalities – protected Characteristics:	None at present
4.7 Socio-economic Duty:	None at present.
4.8 Islands	None at present
4.9 Risk:	None at present
4.10 Customer Service:	None at present.

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