

Notice of Motion for Argyll and Bute Council meeting, 30th September 2021

Climate Emergency – Argyll and Bute

Argyll and Bute Council:

1. Renews the commitment made by this council two years ago, in September 2019, to playing its part in the global effort to address climate challenges, and declares a climate emergency.
2. Acknowledges the United Nations' warning of a 'Code Red for Humanity' situation in relation to tackling climate change, following the publication of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report *Climate Change 2021 – The Physical Science Basis*;
3. Welcomes the significant actions that the council has been taking in recent years, highlighted in Appendix 1, to ensure that Argyll and Bute improves even further its current positive position and low carbon emissions levels and continues to make a significant contribution, with our communities and partners, to fighting the critical impact of climate change;
4. Reaffirms our determination to contribute to tackling the impacts of climate change at local, regional and national levels wherever possible, by agreeing together today that this vital work will continue as a priority for this council, expanding where possible and where necessary as identified through the Action Plan and ongoing monitoring that is already in place.

Appendix 1 – Argyll and Bute Council Action on Climate Change – Overview

Tackling climate change is everyone's responsibility. During the whole of this council term (2017 to 2022) Argyll and Bute Council has considered its contribution to that collective effort to be a key priority – including the theme of 'Greener, Cleaner Communities' as part of its Priorities for the Life of the Council, agreed in September 2017. Environmental issues have featured in council life, business and activity long before that – and that is why the region has made a good head start in addressing this global challenge.

The list below highlights just some of the ways that Argyll and Bute Council is acting on climate change and is proactively climate friendly. It is not exhaustive – but much more detail can be found in the regular reports to the council's Policy and Resources Committee which is charged with monitoring and scrutiny of climate change activity, including the council's Decarbonisation Action Plan.

The motion above declares a climate emergency. In practice, Argyll and Bute Council has already taken – and continues to take – the actions which drive this terminology and bring it into reality:

Setting target dates to reduce local climate impacts:

- Argyll and Bute is already one of the lowest carbon emitting regions in the UK due to low levels of industry pollution and large land mass with hectares of forest cover.
- It also generates a significant amount of renewable energy through wind farms and hydro which means that when electricity is used from the grid, it is greener.
- Argyll and Bute aims to become the UK's first net zero region and its action plan target is net zero by 2045 – with ambitious interim targets of reaching 75% reduction by 2030.

Establishing a working group to report on intermediate and longer term actions:

- The council established the Climate Change Environmental Action Group (CCEAG) in September 2019 – cross party, evidence led, councillor led.
- CCEAG met regularly and also supported a workshop for all councillors as part of ongoing elected member training (which includes exploration of further climate literacy training options).
- The group helped shape the council's first Decarbonisation Plan and Action Plan which was reported to the full council in November 2020.
- Work also fed into the officer-led cross-council Climate Change Board and its predecessor Carbon Management Group (predating 2017).
- A dedicated communications approach to Climate Friendly Argyll and Bute to ensure that issues and actions are visible and to highlight ways that everyone can act and contribute.
- Agreeing that, given the significant importance of climate change activity, the Board's work would now be reported through the council's strategic Policy and Resources Committee (from November 2020 onwards).

Engagement at all levels

- Argyll and Bute Council is a member of the national Sustainable Scotland Network, sharing knowledge and practice with other organisations.
- Climate change is a specific strategic theme progressed by Community Planning Partners at all levels.
- Informal engagement by elected members with local action groups – mapping exercise to capture community activity on climate change.
- Work ongoing on web-based Argyll and Bute Climate Change Directory.
- Direct engagement with key sectors – this year the focus is on agriculture and land use, partnership working with NFUS in relation to climate change impact on that sector.

Strategic leadership

- Everyone has a contribution to make in tackling climate change. All council services and Policy Leads have a role in supporting the council's net zero journey, and the council Leader remains overall strategic lead for climate change. This commitment from senior leadership sets a marker in terms of the importance of the matter to this council.

Other Argyll and Bute Council contributions to collective action on climate change:

- Argyll and Bute Council has delivered a 27% reduction in carbon emissions over the past five years – with emissions dropping for three years in a row.
- Reduction to 28,643 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) in 2019/20, from 34,738 tCO₂e in 2018/19.
- The council has made significant investments in climate change related activity and mitigation, with a total of £1.1m invested in climate change measures in the preceding two council budgets.
- Agreeing £1.2m in energy efficiency saving at council buildings actions at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting in May 2021.
- Undertaking a wide range of actions including but not confined to:
 - Reducing use of disposable and single waste plastics across services
 - Food waste reduction measures, including pre-order system at school
 - Renewable heat incentive projects
 - LED streetlight and lightbulb replacement programme
 - Installation of over 30 biomass boilers in schools and council buildings
 - Changing oil boilers to air source heat systems in other buildings
 - Installing solar panels on council buildings which generate over 1MW of renewable energy
 - Replacing petrol/diesel council vehicles with new electric fleet – and wider Fleet Replacement Strategy for future replacement approach
 - Reducing road miles in service delivery through new vehicle routing system
 - Developing the council's first Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy
 - Expansion of fleet charge point infrastructure, including securing £700k funding to install new EV points

- All of the above contributing to national target of phasing out new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2032
- Identifying water efficiencies at council premises
- Administering an annual £1m-plus grant (£1.7m in 2021) to help people make energy efficient improvements at home.
- Securing £2.3m Scottish Government funding to support ACHA's external wall insulation programme and improve energy efficiency in local homes.
- Developing a Renewable Sourcing Strategy.
- Review of flood and coastal protection policies.
- Ongoing support of the Argyll and Bute Renewables Alliance (ABRA) and annual review of Renewable Energy Strategy.
- Continued support for offshore renewable proposals and development.
- Council-owned Miss Hoolie wind turbine powering Mull's waste disposal site.
- Annual review of Sustainable Procurement Policy.
- Identifying and driving forward carbon offset projects and activity – including tree planting partnership with Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust (ACT Argyll), planting more than 60 hectares of council land in Lochgilphead.
- Education Service participation in Queen's Green Canopy planting initiative over 2021 and 2022.
- 98 Argyll and Bute schools are Eco Schools (the first being Inveraray Primary School back in 2003) with many schools gaining more than five Green Flags.
- Creation of sustainable, outdoor learning spaces.
- Hosting Education Climate Change Summit in October 2021 – bringing together at least 25 educational establishments, third sector organisations and businesses to join forces in discussing a range of climate-related issues.
- Development of online resources targeted at schools to highlight the importance of the waste hierarchy (reduce, reuse, recycle, prevention) in combatting climate change.
- 'Digital by Default' approach across council services which reduces travel, printing, paper usage and contributes to overall targets.
- Innovative drone pilot scheme to transport medical supplies to remote and hard to reach areas and islands.
- Ongoing active travel activity following combined investment of almost £1m in preceding two council budgets and range of local projects including most recently the Lochgilphead town centre active travel route consultation and partnership working to deliver the Scotrail Highland Explorer Active Travel Carriage, the first of its kind in the UK.

For more detail on Argyll and Bute Council's progress in achieving net zero, please check the regular reports considered by the Policy and Resources Committee.