ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL **POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

CLIMATE CHANGE BOARD **20th August 2026**

CLIMATE CHANGE BOARD - CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVITY UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Policy & Resources Committee on climate change activity across the Council since the previous report of 26 August 2025. It provides an overview of the Council's emissions performance for 2024/25, summarises significant developments in Scottish national climate policy, and reports on the Council's governance, operational, and partnership activity during the period.

1.2 The Council's total carbon emissions for 2024/25 were 25,340 tCO2e, representing a 7.9% reduction from the previous year and a 35.8% reduction from the 2015/16 baseline. This reverses the 3.8% in-year increase reported in August 2025. The transition from landfill to Energy from Waste was a significant driver of the reduction, particularly in Scope 3 emissions.

1.3 The period has seen the publication of Scotland's Climate Change Plan 2026-2040 and the finalisation of new statutory guidance for public bodies under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 - the first update since 2011. These developments establish the statutory framework within which the Council's climate change activity must now be planned and delivered.

1.4 The Council is developing a Carbon Management Plan 2026 which will set out the corporate response to the new statutory requirements. A separate report will be brought to committee in due course.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Policy & Resources Committee:

(a) Commend the Council's 2024/25 emissions performance and the continued long-term reduction in carbon emissions since baseline;

(b) Consider the significant national policy developments during the reporting period, including the publication of Scotland's Climate Change Plan 2026-

2040 and the finalised Public Bodies Climate Change Duties statutory guidance, and

(c) Note the Council's governance, operational delivery and partnership activity in response, together with the development of the Carbon Management Plan 2026, which will be brought to committee in due course.

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

3.1 On 26 August 2025, the Policy & Resources Committee considered two reports on climate change activity: the Climate Change Board Performance Report and Public Sector Duties Return, and the Climate Change Board Update and Decarbonisation Tracker. The Committee noted the Council's emissions performance for 2023/24 - a 31.26% overall reduction from baseline, offset by a 3.8% in-year increase attributable primarily to an increase in national electricity grid carbon intensity. The Committee endorsed four strategic priorities to accelerate climate action.

3.2 This report provides an update on activity since that time. The period has been one of substantial change in the national policy landscape, with two major publications - Scotland's Climate Change Plan 2026-2040 and the finalised Public Bodies Climate Change Duties (PBCCD) statutory guidance - establishing a fundamentally new statutory framework for local authority climate action. The Council has responded through strengthened internal governance, continued operational delivery, and active partnership working.

4.0 NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 Scotland's Climate Change Plan 2026-2040 was published on 23 March 2026. This is the first Scottish Climate Change Plan to be underpinned by statutory just transition principles and sets out three five-year carbon budget periods toward the net zero 2045 target, with a place-based delivery approach. The Council submitted a substantial statutory consultation response on 29 January 2026, approved at a Special Council meeting, with contributions from seven or more service areas. The response was commended by the Policy Lead for Climate Change and Environment.

4.2 The finalised Public Bodies Climate Change Duties (PBCCD) statutory guidance was published on 5 March 2026 - the first update since 2011. The guidance requires public bodies to develop a climate change strategy, a carbon

management plan, adaptation planning, and a decarbonisation pathway. Mandatory Scope 3 emissions reporting will come into effect from November 2027 for Group 1 categories. Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) will begin structured scrutiny of local authority compliance from 2026-27 onwards.

4.3 The Climate Change Committee's progress assessment of Scotland, published in February 2026, found that credible plans are in place for 91% of the emissions reductions needed to achieve Scotland's First Carbon Budget (2026-2030). The Committee identified ongoing concerns around the pace of buildings decarbonisation.

5.0 EMISSIONS PERFORMANCE

5.1 The Council's total carbon emissions for 2024/25 were 25,340 tCO2e, compared with 27,514 tCO2e in 2023/24 - a reduction of 7.9%. This reverses the in-year increase of 3.8% reported to this Committee in August 2025.

5.2 Measured against the 2015/16 baseline of 39,464 tCO2e, the Council has achieved an overall reduction of 35.8%.

5.3 The transition from landfill to Energy from Waste processing was a significant driver of this improvement, particularly in Scope 3 emissions which fell by 11.5%. As the August 2025 report anticipated, the waste transition was expected to be the single most impactful decarbonisation action in the short term. The Council's directly controlled performance - building heating (Scope 1) and electricity consumption (Scope 2) - also continued to improve.

5.4 A summary of emissions by scope is provided at Appendix 1.

6.0 COUNCIL RESPONSE

6.1 Governance and Statutory Compliance.

6.2 A formal briefing on the finalised PBCCD statutory guidance was delivered to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) - the first such briefing on statutory climate change duties at that level. A quarterly SLT reporting slot has now been established to work through the themes of the new guidance systematically. This represents a strengthening of senior governance oversight.

6.3 Following the SLT briefing, SLT agreed to continue to support and grow the numbers of staff completing Carbon Literacy training, with the aim of working toward Silver Carbon Literate Organisation accreditation.

6.4 Work to develop and improve how climate change considerations are applied to council decision-making continues, with climate implications reviews being

undertaken for a subset of council committee reports. This is an ongoing process of learning and improvement.

6.5 The Climate Change Board has continued to meet during the period. Climate adaptation has been adopted as a regular Board theme from April 2026.

6.6 **Operational Delivery**

6.7 A Drax Foundation-funded 24 kWp solar PV system was installed at Taynuilt Primary School. The contract was awarded and the system was installed and commissioned by Easter 2026, with the full project delivered within the reporting period from funding approval to commissioning.

6.8 Progress continues on the planned expansion of solar PV capacity at the Kilmory headquarters estate, where District Network Operator (DNO) headroom has been increased from 50 kW to 200 kW. This project remains in the development and planning phase.

6.9 Property Services has continued its programme of building energy efficiency works, low-carbon heat conversions, and the Drax Foundation LED lighting programme, which delivered LED upgrades across seven schools near Cruachan Power Station at a partnership investment of approximately £148,000.

6.10 A £500,000 Climate Emergency Fund has been Council allocated to prioritise programme areas which include solar PV installations, building improvement works, staff training, school recycling infrastructure, and emissions recording and software support.

6.11 **Carbon Management Plan 2026**

6.12 The development of the Carbon Management Plan 2026 is underway. The plan replaces the Net Zero Route Map referenced in the August 2025 report. Its development has needed to incorporate the requirements of both the finalised PBCCD statutory guidance and Scotland's Climate Change Plan 2026-2040, both of which arrived in March 2026 and substantively changed the statutory framework within which the plan sits. The Carbon Management Plan will be brought to committee in due course.

7.0 WASTE TRANSITION

7.1 The implementation of Scotland’s ban on landfilling biodegradable municipal waste from 1 January 2026 has resulted in a significant change to the Council’s waste treatment arrangements. Across the mainland Waste PPP area and Helensburgh and Lomond, biodegradable municipal waste is no longer being sent to landfill, with residual waste now bulked and transferred for processing into refuse-derived fuel for Energy from Waste. The former Mechanical

Biological Treatment facilities at Moleigh, Lingerton and Dalinlongart have been converted to waste transfer station use to support this new model.

7.2 In FQ4 2025/26, Council-wide waste recycling, composting and recovery reached **95.3%**, comprising **41.3% recycling and composting** and **54% recovery**. This represents a substantial shift away from landfill and is therefore material to the Council's climate change reporting. However, the distinction between recycling/composting and recovery remains important, as Energy from Waste is not equivalent to waste prevention, reuse or recycling in climate or circular economy terms.

7.3 Temporary derogations remain in place for limited municipal landfill activity at Glengorm on Mull and Gartbreck on Islay, reflecting island transport constraints including ferry capacity and reliability. These derogations should be treated as a residual transitional issue, with the longer-term climate objective remaining continued diversion from landfill and further movement up the waste hierarchy where practicable.

7.4 Detailed post-PPP procurement and mobilisation arrangements are being managed through the waste programme and EDI reporting. For the purposes of this climate change update, the relevant point is that the post-landfill operating model is now materially altering the Council's waste emissions context and will need to be reflected in future climate reporting, performance monitoring and service planning.

8.0 PARTNERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

8.1 In February 2026, Cardross Primary School became the first primary school in the world to achieve Bronze Carbon Literate Educator status. The award was presented by Jackie Baillie MSP at Hermitage Academy. This achievement was the product of sustained partnership working between Cardross Primary, ABCAN, ACT, and the Council.

8.2 The Community Planning Partnership's Climate Ready Region business case has been delivered, with the Waterman Group consultancy engaged to develop governance options and a cost-benefit analysis. The Climate Ready Region is in early development, with work now progressing to engage consultants to deliver area-wide climate risk and opportunities mapping. Argyll and Bute is piloting an approach using the local Climate Action Hub - ABCAN and ACT - as the coordinating partner.

8.3 A presentation on climate change activity was delivered to the Customer Support Services management group in January 2026, and work is now developing communications, training, and engagement opportunities with CSS.

8.4 The Council acknowledges the continuing and valued contribution of ACT, ABCAN, and the Community Planning Partnership to climate action across the Argyll and Bute area

9.0 ADAPTATION

9.1 The Climate Change Board adopted climate adaptation as a regular theme from April 2026. The Council is progressing the Leaders' Climate Adaptation Checklist as part of a structured approach to strengthening its adaptation response.

9.2 Adaptation is a statutory duty under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The Council is strengthening its approach to ensure that adaptation considerations are embedded across service planning and capital decision-making. Recent severe weather events reinforce the importance of this work and will be the subject of a more detailed report later in the year.

10.0 CONCLUSION

10.1 The period since August 2025 has been one of significant national policy development and sustained local activity. The Council's emissions have continued to fall, achieving a 35.8% reduction from baseline. The statutory landscape has been fundamentally reshaped by the publication of Scotland's Climate Change Plan and the new PBCCD guidance, and the Council has responded through strengthened governance, continued operational delivery, and effective partnership working.

10.2 A Carbon Management Plan 2026 is being developed to provide the comprehensive corporate response required by the new statutory framework, and will be brought to committee in due course. A more detailed report covering a similar period is planned for full Council later in the year.

11.0 IMPLICATIONS

11.1	Policy	This report aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2027 and the Council's statutory obligations under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The activities described support the Council's commitment to working toward net zero emissions by 2045 in line with the Scottish Government target.

11.2	Financial	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The £500,000 Climate Emergency Fund and the £1.03 million EVIF allocation referenced are the subject of separate governance processes. Costs associated with the PBCCD statutory guidance and Scope 3 reporting requirements from November 2027 will be assessed as part of the Carbon Management Plan 2026 development.
11.3	Legal	The Council has statutory climate change duties under Part 4 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, supported by the finalised PBCCD statutory guidance published on 5 March 2026. Environmental Standards Scotland will scrutinise compliance from 2026-27 onwards.
11.4	HR	SLT has agreed to continue to support and grow the numbers of staff completing Carbon Literacy training. There are no other direct HR implications arising from this report.
11.5	Customer Service	There are no direct customer service implications arising from this report.
11.6	Risk	The introduction of mandatory Scope 3 reporting from November 2027 presents a compliance risk requiring investment in data systems and specialist capacity. This risk is being addressed through the development of the Carbon Management Plan 2026 and the PBCCD obligations mapping exercise.
11.7	Climate Change	This report is itself a climate change progress report and the activities described contribute directly to the Council's climate change objectives across mitigation, adaptation, and sustainability.
11.8	Fairer Scotland Duty	An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this progress report.
11.9	Equalities – protected characteristics	An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this progress report.
11.10	Consumer Duty	An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this progress report.
11.11	Island Communities	The activities described in this report apply across all areas of the local authority. The Council's consultation response to the Scottish Climate Change Plan specifically highlighted the distinctive needs of rural and island communities. The temporary SEPA derogations for the island waste sites at Glengorm and Gartbreck reflect the particular logistical challenges of island waste management.

1112	Children's Rights and Wellbeing	The Carbon Literacy achievement at Cardross Primary School and the school recycling programme supported by the Climate Emergency Fund contribute positively to children's engagement with climate action. No adverse implications for children's rights and wellbeing have been identified.

Douglas Hendry, Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services

Policy Lead Climate Change & Environment, Councillor Luna Martin

For Further Information:-

Ross McLaughlin, Head of Commercial Services

Helensburgh and Lomond Civic Centre

ross.mclaughlin@argyll-bute.gov.uk