

22nd June 2022

Report of	Assistant Director of Place and Client Services	Author	Ben Plummer
Title	Climate Emergency Action Plan Update		☎ 508965
Wards affected	Not applicable		

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report details key progress made with the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP), and other relevant updates since the previous meeting on 22nd March 2022. This sits alongside the other report going to the Environment and Sustainability Panel which provides an overview of progress made on action related to environment and sustainability, and sets out key priorities for the coming year.

1.2 Progress/Updates include:

- CBC worked with University of Essex on '**challenge lab**' to secure funding to work on two projects to tackle climate related challenges CBC identified in the borough. These projects are to be implemented between June 2022 – December 2022 and focus on; reducing single use plastics with town centre businesses and exploring the potential to reuse waste oyster shell to protect coastal environments from coastal erosion and sea level rise.
- Work has begun on the **refurbishment of Rowan House** that will help to significantly decarbonise the building. The works will include the installation of an air source heat pump, roof insulation, LED lighting and mechanical ventilation and a heat recovery system. Additionally, 12 charging points have been installed at Rowan House to support the electric vehicle transition
- **Nature recovery site signage** installed across several of the Council's green spaces where areas are being left to wild with no mowing between March – September to support the growth of wildflowers and grasses which can support pollinators and other insects. The signage was designed by local school children and explains the reasoning behind the nature recovery sites.
- Work is being undertaken to increase the Council's understanding of reducing emissions through **offsetting and insetting**. Two separate projects with Kent Wildlife Trust and Anthesis Group, aim to understand the carbon reduction and biodiversity potential of nature based offsetting solutions and how local authority and private investment may be combined to create local projects that can reduce emissions in the borough respectively.
- **A new bike shelter** has recently been installed at Shrub End Depot to support staff to cycle to work. The covered shelter will provide more capacity for bikes, and helps to both reduce emissions from staff commuting as well as benefitting staff wellbeing. This runs alongside other workshops carried out at the depot such as Dr Bike sessions.
- **Essex Schools Green Day** has been planned in for 6th July 2022. The day will be about raising environmental awareness in schools and getting schools to demonstrate what they are doing to protect the environment and tackle climate

change. The Council and other organisations are supporting the day by attending several of the 15 primary schools that are participating on the day or during that week.

- **Climate Action Challenge Fund** made available by Essex County Council for communities to apply to carry out projects that tackle climate related challenges. Community groups, parish councils, charities and schools can bid for funding of up to £20,000. More information about the fund is available at www.essex.gov.uk/leisure-culture-local-heritage/culture-and-communities.
- The **Eco Festival** has been agreed to take place on 3rd September 2022. The Sustainability, Transport and Climate Change Team are leading in ensuring our sustainable modes of travel work is showcased, along with resident input into existing and future schemes. The festival had a great turn out with over 3500 people attending.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the report and to provide any guidance on the progress being made with areas of the action plan, or ongoing work in these areas.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To ensure that the Panel is content with the progress made to date and has the chance to feedback on ongoing work.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not Applicable

5. Key updates

- 5.1 The Council is participating in a challenge lab organised by the University of Essex. The challenge lab process brings together university researchers/staff and staff from an external organisation to brainstorm ideas to tackle a challenge faced by the organisation. During this lab, two project briefs were worked up in collaboration with the Council and have had funding approved to undertake them. These are on reducing single use plastics in town centre businesses and exploring the potential of recycling waste oyster shell as a way to adapt to a changing climate, and the risks emerging such as sea level rise and coastal erosion. Further details can be found in the University's [press release](#).
- 5.2 Work has begun on site at Rowan House to start the refurbishment of it into a low carbon building. An air source heat pump, roof insulation, LED lighting, mechanical ventilation and heat recovery and a building management system will all contribute to making the building more energy efficient and lower carbon. This work was funded by a £527,250 grant secured from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. Complementing this, 12 electric vehicle charging points have recently been installed at Rowan House, which can be used for staff or fleet vehicles.
- 5.3 The Council has recently installed signage on several green spaces across Colchester where they are not being mown between March – September in order to create wilder environments to support pollinators and insects. The 'nature recovery sites' have had signs installed by them to explain the reasons why the areas are not being mown and were designed by local school children.
- 5.4 A new bike shelter was recently installed at shrub end depot to support staff to cycle to work. This links in with the Council's travel plan work which provides support and incentives for staff to travel to and for work using sustainable transport modes where possible. The team have also been running Dr Bike sessions to help repair bikes that staff own, helping to complement the installation of the bike shelter. This project will also help to boost staff wellbeing by enabling them to keep healthy and active for work.
- 5.5 The Council has been working on two projects to improve its understanding of potential solutions that could contribute to reducing emissions for the Council and in the borough through offsetting and inseting. Reducing emissions directly (e.g. by electrifying fleet vehicles or installing low carbon heating) will always be the priority but there will be residual Council emissions, as well as emissions in the borough to reduce. Working with Kent Wildlife Trust the Council is trying to understand the potential of nature-based solutions like tree planting and wetland restoration for reducing emissions. The project is identifying multiple green spaces in the borough that may be suitable for a nature based project and using a tool produced by Kent Wildlife Trust to estimate the carbon emissions benefit from implementing a specific project. The project has been funded by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).

The second project has involved the Council working with Anthesis Group, a sustainability consultancy, who have developed a concept called [Authority Based Insetting \(ABI\)](#) which could provide an opportunity to reduce emissions locally rather than offsetting which is traditionally done in a faraway country. Anthesis will be doing several talks with Council officers, local organisations and businesses to promote the concept and get the views of these groups on the potential of this concept and how it could harness and combine local authority and private investment to accelerate the implementation of local carbon reduction projects. Anthesis have produced a short video

explaining ABI which is displayed on their [website](#) and a [questionnaire](#) that is being circulated with organisations related to the concept and the carbon reduction plans of those organisations.

- 5.6 The Essex Schools 'Green Day' will be taking place on 6th July 2022. The day ran for the first time on 8th July 2021, organised by the lead of the [Multi Schools Council](#). 15 primary schools across the borough have signed up to take part, with CBC and other organisations offering support on the day and throughout the week for those taking part. 2 of the 3 primary schools awarded grant funding from East of England Co-Op to support them to undertake environmental projects were based in Colchester borough. Councillors are very welcome to contact schools if they would like to attend and see what each school is doing as part of the day.
- 5.7 Essex County Council have launched a [Climate Action Challenge Fund](#) pot for communities to bid into to carry out projects that tackle a climate related challenge. Community groups, parish councils, charities and schools amongst others can bid for funding of up to £20,000 and is open until March 31, 2023 or until funds last. Further information about the fund and its guidelines can be found [here](#). This information has been circulated with Community 360, Town and Parish Clerks and all councillors.
- 5.8 The date for the upcoming Eco Festival 2022 has been agreed for 3rd September 2022. Last year, the event attracted over 3500 people, and we hope this number will increase this year. The Council will be supporting the event by providing sustainable transport options on the day using eCargo bikes, and will be having several stalls on the day to promote its projects involving sustainable travel, air quality, waste and biodiversity. The Council also awarded a Cultural and Creative event grant to support the festival.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 This report has no equality, diversity and human rights implications.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 All of the updates provided in this report contribute to the Strategic Plan 2020-2023 theme of 'Tackling the Climate Challenge and Sustainability'.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 There are no consultation considerations for this paper, although several of the projects referenced have consultation elements within them and success in tackling climate change will involve engagement and education of others to influence behaviour change more widely.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 There are no specific publicity considerations.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 There are no specific financial implications from this paper.

11. Community Safety Implications

11.1 There are no specific community safety implications from this paper.

12. Health and Safety Implications

12.1 There are no health and safety implications.

13. Risk Management Implications

13.1 There are no risk management implications from this update.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

14.1 The updates mentioned in this report are all relevant to tackling climate change and/or improving the environment. Actions and projects highlighted in the report all have co-benefits outside of environmental improvements for residents.

14.2 Provision of supporting infrastructure for electric vehicles, alongside promoting uptake of sustainable modes of travel is a key way to provide residents with options for travelling across the borough sustainably. Many of these methods provide residents with health benefits, alongside cost savings and reductions in emissions.