

21 March 2023

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

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report details key progress made with the actions within Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) over the past year. This is split into the different themes of the CEAP.

1.2 Some of the key highlights of progress within the CEAP are:

- Completed decarbonisation works to the refurbished Rowan House office, including the installation of an air source heat pump, roof insulation, LED lighting, mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system, alongside the installation of 12 electric vehicle charge points in the car park; followed £500k of BEIS grant funding being secured.
- Procured six electric vans for the Council fleet to reduce emissions, adding to 4 hybrid vehicles and the electric vehicles being used by North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP).
- Continued progression of both the Northern Gateway Heat Network and the feasibility study, business case and design work for a new solar park and microgrid.
- Introduced more “re-wilding” and “no mow” areas, ceased use of glyphosates, and trialled goat grazing in Highwoods Country Park, as well as adding signage to educate residents on Council’s ‘no mow’ approach to management of several Council green spaces between months of March-September.
- Developed partnership with local charity Market Field Grows to carry out tree planting in order to provide work opportunities to young adults with disabilities/special needs.
- Supported the ecargo bike delivery service with their Christmas delivery service trial, enabling people to have their shopping delivered to their home for a small charge by eCargo bike. The trial helped replaced 61 miles of van deliveries, reducing emissions produced within the city centre.
- Received an award for the CAREless Pollution campaign that ran to raise awareness of “no idling” and air pollution, alongside the success of the no-idling psychological signage trial.
- Delivered Colchester’s first electric car club car based in Priory Street car park, the start of a network that will grow as part of s106 agreements with developers, and further grant funding and commercialisation.
- Created litter picking hubs containing all the equipment needed to do a litter pick, enabling residents to pick up litter on-the-go.
- Collected 110 bikes through the ‘Community Cycle’ project that could then be repaired and donated to community groups and residents in need. Also supported at 2nd Eco festival with stalls on active travel, woodland and biodiversity project and more to engage residents about our projects.

- Supporting businesses with the environmental challenge by promoting net zero business support through the Colchester Business Enterprise Agency (Colbea), integrating considering of environment in the Council's economic strategy, and securing funding to upskill local installers to install energy efficiency and decarbonisation measures to required standards.
 - Revised the Council's Travel Plan to ensure staff are provided with options to use sustainable travel to, from, and for, work. This included supporting the funding of a more secure bike shelter at Shrub End Depot, alongside running Dr Bike sessions for staff.
- 1.3 The Council has many planned actions to help progress on the Climate Emergency Action Plan. Key actions include the development of a new carbon management plan to outline actions for reducing emissions from the Council's buildings, working with Essex County Council on delivery of sustainable travel infrastructure projects linked in with the Town Deal, supporting delivery of grant funded domestic energy efficiency projects and more.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To note the contents of the report and to provide any guidance on the progress being made with actions within the action plan, including any areas where action could be strengthened.
- 2.2 To make any recommendations to Cabinet about future work priorities in 2023/24 and/or beyond.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

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

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Not Applicable

5. Climate Emergency Action Plan – Background

- 5.1 At the start of 2022, The Council had a Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) in place, consisting of 8 themes and over 50 actions. Key highlights and achievements from actions under each of these themes will be covered in the report.
- 5.2 The Council recently updated its CEAP for 2022-2023, publishing this in January 2023. This expanded the coverage of actions within the plan, especially to include more action in relation to climate adaptation and greater information on what people in the community can do to reduce their environmental footprint. Reference to this plan will be made at the end of the report when action for 2023 and beyond is focussed on.

Climate Emergency Action Plan – Summary of progress

Reduce carbon emissions from our buildings

- 5.3 Key highlights from this theme include:
- Reported greenhouse gas emissions reduction of **10.1% between financial year 2018/19 (our baseline year) and financial year 2021/22**. Reporting on progress in financial year 2022/23 will be captured as part of the annual emissions reporting that is conducted between June-September 2023. Further action will be required in the following years to bring emissions down in line with projected emissions to 2030.
 - Begun analysis of opportunities identified for **decarbonising and increasing the energy efficiency of 6 of the Council's highest emitting buildings**. Work will continue in 2023 to create a plan identifying which measures should take place in each of the buildings, and to identify funding sources. This will align with wider asset management work, budget setting for 2023/23 and future years, and continue alongside aims to produce more energy savings in Council buildings in the short-term.
 - **Completing decarbonisation of Rowan House**, the Council's main office, including the installation of an air source heat pump, roof insulation, LED lighting, mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system, alongside the installation of 12 electric vehicle charge points in the car park.
 - **Procurement** of six electric vans for the Council fleet that will contribute to emissions reductions from the Council, adding to 4 hybrid vehicles and the electric vehicles being used by North Essex Parking Partnership. The impact these vehicles make on the Council's overall emissions reductions will be captured for the first time in the Council's emissions report for financial year 2022/23.

Produce renewable energy

- 5.4 Key highlights from this theme include:
- Continued progression of developing the **Northern Gateway Heat Network** to provide low carbon heat to 650 homes, nearly 35,000m² of commercial space and a health village. Now awaiting confirmation of when development build out will take place, with the design work of heat network completed ready to enable activation of installation when needed.
 - Feasibility work for a **solar park and microgrid**, which will contribute to powering the Northern Gateway development with renewable electricity, has continued and is being progressed towards a planning application in summer/autumn 2023.

- **Increasing our understanding of the potential of heat network (zones)** for providing heat to a range of buildings, keeping track with the Government's work on heat network zoning and its continued support of this form of heat generation.

Enhance biodiversity and protect our environment

5.5 Key highlights from this theme include:

- **Introduction of 10 cheviot goats to Highwoods Country Park** to help graze scrub vegetation to support the restoration of a wildflower meadow.
- **Tree planting** delivered through Local Authority Treescape Fund and Queen's Green Canopy project, and supporting The Conservation Volunteers with the planting of a ['Miyawaki forest'](#) (also known as a 'tiny forest') at a local primary school.
- **Partnership with [Market Field Grows](#) for them to deliver tree planting activities** across the borough. The organisation's aim is to provide employment opportunities for young people with disabilities.
- Launch of project with supporting funding and guidance for community groups to help create **new community orchards**.
- **Installation of signage** at several of the Council's green spaces where no mowing is taking place between March-September in order to support the growth of wildflowers and grasses to support pollinators and other insects. This project has also worked to support Wivenhoe Town Council with their approach to 'no mow, no sow', where they are leaving verges to 'wild' and enable the growth of wildflowers.
- Continued trials and implementation of approaches to support biodiversity through changes to maintenance of green spaces through **ban on glyphosate-based products** (extended to Colchester Borough Homes maintained sites) and **reduction in mowing** on many green spaces.

Facilitate walking, cycling and sustainable transport around Colchester

5.6 Key highlights from this theme include:

- **Progressing the £120,000 of partnership-funded Fixing the Link "Phase 2" projects** to encourage walking between the main rail station and the City Centre, which will include the "trees in planters" soon to be installed in North Station Road, along with a key planting and lighting scheme on the Albert roundabout to be installed later in the 2023 planting season.
- **Worked with Essex County Council** to feedback information about active travel routes including the East-West cycle route from Lexden Road to East Hill, extension from East Hill to University and Greenstead route and other Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs).
- Supported the **ecargo bike delivery service with their Christmas delivery service trial**, enabling people to have their shopping delivered to their home for a small charge by eCargo bike. The trial helped replaced 61 miles of van deliveries, reducing emissions produced within the city centre. Work to build on the trial will continue in 2023, working with the City Centre BID and other organisations.
- **Over 30,000 miles collectively travelled by eCargo bikes** in the eCargo bike library by a range of organisations, with a refresh of eCargo bike champions and further short term loans of bikes provided.

- Support provided to **local businesses and organisations with the development and implementation of workplace travel plans** to encourage more sustainable and active travel through the Colchester Travel Plan Club. Officers have continued to work with bus operators to secure discounts for Travel Plan Club members.
- **Over 100 adults in Colchester received free cycle training** to improve their cycling confidence. This availability of free training will continue in 2023, with more information available [here](#).
- **Offering Colchester's first electric car club car** in Priory Street car park, enabling people to borrow the car as and when needed.
- **Successful trial of psychological based messaging to encourage no-idling** on Brook Street and Eastgates, increasing vehicle engine switch offs by an increase of 11% on baseline figures at peak switch off rates.
- **Increased engagement and awareness about air quality through the [CAREless Pollution Campaign](#)**, working with 23 local schools to provide a school toolkit and other resources, collaborating with businesses such as McDonalds and St Helena Hospice, and developing a resident toolkit for improving knowledge about air quality. The project was 'highly commended' at the 2022 Edie Sustainability Leaders Awards in the 'Consumer Engagement/Marketing campaign of the year'. Resources have also been developed through the [home burning campaign](#) to raise awareness of the pollution produced from wood burning stoves and open fires, in an effort to encourage residents to burn better fuels (such as well seasoned wood) and to burn less to help improve local air quality and reduce harm to human health.

Provide sustainable waste management and support residents to reduce, reuse and recycle

5.7 Key highlights from this theme include:

- **Installation of 4 smart bins in Dedham** to help with litter management and to improve the efficiency of waste collections. The solar-powered bins have a compacting feature enabling more waste to be stored in them, and can notify Council staff when the bins are almost full to indicate they need emptying.
- **Creation of litter picking hubs around Colchester**, that provide residents with litter picking equipment, hi-vis jackets and bin bags enabling them to pick up litter on-the-go.
- **Begin the development of a new Recycling and Waste Strategy** to improve collections of waste around the borough, aligning this with actions to come out of the Environment Act.

Enable partnerships and community action for sustainability and low carbon development

5.8 Key highlights from this theme include:

- **Supported 11 schools** as part of the Essex Schools Green Day 2022, a day dedicated for all schools to take part in environmental learning and awareness activities, by providing donated gardening and outdoor resources to them alongside giving several assemblies about climate change and the Council's climate action.
- **110 bikes donated** through the 'Community Cycle' project that were repaired and given out to those local community groups and individuals most in need.

- **Strengthened partnership with University of Essex** on several projects, including work with schools on raising environmental awareness, no idling signage evaluation, single use plastics reduction and coastal protection.
- **Delivery of the 16th year of Trees for Years**, to provide residents with new trees and shrubs for their gardens that will help support biodiversity.
- **Presentation to Town and Parish Councils** about opportunities for them to tackle climate change and support offered throughout year to help with actions they wanted to implement to reduce their environmental impacts and greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Supported delivery of the 2nd Eco Festival** organised by En-Form and Eco Colchester. The Council had a presence at this event with several stalls promoting Council projects, as well as helping for the transportation of equipment and materials to and from the site using the Council's eCargo bikes.
- **Participation in the Climate Action Anchor working groups co-ordinated by the Essex Climate Action Commission**, to collaborate on plans for climate action across Essex with key organisations like University of Essex, NHS hospitals and other local authorities. The main action delivered in the past year through the group was the support provided to develop training for frontline workers on fuel poverty awareness to increase their awareness of ways they can help residents to reduce their bills, get access to grants for energy efficiency and be able to point them to further support available.

Sustainable planning, built environment and green economy

5.9 Key highlights from this theme include:

- Integrating 'planet' as one of the four themes of **Colchester's Economic Strategy 2022-2025**, to ensure that work to support economic development within the borough considers its impact on the environment and how businesses can adapt to changing climate impacts and associated business markets.
- Supported and promoted the **net zero business support and business cost reduction programmes** delivered by the Colchester Business Enterprise Agency (COLBEA) that focussed on helping business to understand more about carbon emissions and their carbon footprints, and ways to cut their costs through reducing energy and waste, amongst other elements.
- Secured funding through Essex County Council for **professional retrofit training to be rolled out in Colchester**. The funding will enable local people to become qualified in different roles required to deliver retrofit to the required Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 2035 standards that Government are demanding to deliver retrofit funding. The Council will work with local training providers to deliver the training for the roles of retrofit co-ordinator (person with overall responsibility for each stage of project), retrofit advisor (deliverer of advice to householders or clients on different retrofit measures) and retrofit assessor (carrying out assessment of home to identify which measures may be suitable for the home).
- Delivery of **funding from Government for energy efficiency improvements for households on low incomes and living in energy inefficient homes**. Funding has come through two schemes; Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phases 2 and 3, with total spends through both to be determined in the coming months.

Change the way we work to achieve our climate commitment

5.10 Key highlights from this theme include:

- **Delivery of Dr Bike sessions at Shrub End Depot**, to provide bike repairs to staff bikes and cycling related support to aid cycling to work. **A new cycle shelter** was also installed to provide a more secure facility for staff to lock their bikes up whilst at work.
- Development of **e-learning training for staff to make them more aware of climate change and environmental issues**, the Council's role in reducing emissions and environmental impacts and linking this back to how staff can make a difference, both in their work role and at home, to reduce their environmental footprint. The training has been developed and is aimed to be launched from June 2023. Member training was held on the actions within the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan in September 2022.
- Running a **behaviour change campaign focussing on reducing quantities of printing completed and postage** sent by Council staff. This aimed to raise awareness of the alternatives to sending and sharing information by print and post that could help to reduce costs and environmental impacts such as the digital hybrid mail (Hi-mail) service, alongside enabling staff to collect information through digital formats rather than on paper forms.
- **Revise the Council's Travel Plan** in light of changes to working patterns to ensure staff are provided with support to travel sustainably (by walking, cycling, public transport etc.) to and for work. The benefits provided by staff through the travel plan include public transport discounts, a salary sacrifice scheme for bikes and the opportunity to use pool bikes (including electric bikes) for attending meetings, visits or events.
- **Environmental steps being taken by the Colchester Museums team**, including the repurposing and reuse of materials from old exhibitions into new exhibitions, reducing use of single use plastic materials in the museum shops, getting staff trained in 'carbon literacy' and starting an Environmental Champions group to identify ways for museum operations to become greener and how museums can be used to raise environmental awareness.

Plans for 2023

5.11 The Council published its Climate Emergency Action Plan 2022-2023 in January 2023. This outlines actions the Council will seek to deliver throughout 2023 (and some beyond this), that will help to reduce environmental impacts and greenhouse gas emissions within the Council and across the borough. Some key actions from this (and that have emerged since its publishing) are outlined below:

- **Developing a Carbon Reduction and Management Plan to detail energy efficiency and decarbonisation measures to complete within CCC buildings** including timelines for these works, costs and paybacks and greenhouse gas emission savings.
- Investigate opportunities to take onboard learning from the 'building with nature' project looking at the potential to **collect and use waste oyster shell to then be placed on the coastline with seeded oyster larvae at Mersea to accelerate the oyster reef formation**. These reefs have the potential to help act as a natural breakwater to counter sea level rise to slow coastal erosion and reduce storm damage.

- Continue to **build on learnings of ‘No Mow approach’ and implement at more Council green spaces where appropriate** to help with the naturalisation and less intensive maintenance of these spaces that can support biodiversity.
- Build on **masterplan for Cymbeline Meadows to be a nature reserve, including creating new habitats and management of the site to support biodiversity**
- Using **£310,770 of funding received from Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to continue work on air quality**, including funding resource for 2 full time officers; 1 to engage with businesses about sustainable travel and 1 to focus on community engagement with schools and residents about air quality. Funding will also go towards producing an up to date Cycle Colchester map, an update of the Cycle Colchester website, developing a short term eCargo bike loan scheme for residents alongside a ‘Care for your air’ e-learning module for businesses.
- Link in within Essex County Council and other partners to deliver active travel projects linked with the Town Deal work, including the **provision of 750 free bikes through the ‘Pedal Power’ scheme in Greenstead.**
- Support GO4 café and volunteers in Newtown to set up a **shared eCargo bike hub** for residents to access eCargo and electric bikes on a pay as you go basis.
- **Open the secure cycle park in the city centre** for residents to access an app based secure facility to lock their bikes, alongside providing access to electric/eCargo bikes on a pay as you go basis for residents and the Colchester Bike Kitchen for bike repairs and maintenance that will both be based in the secure cycle park.
- Investigate opportunity to work with Tier (escooter provider) **to set up an electric bike pay as you go hire scheme** to enable residents to have access to these for work and leisure journeys.
- **Use S106 contributions to develop projects to support walking and cycling in east Colchester**, including the ‘Walking with Words’ wayfinding project and looking to develop projects to make the King Edward Quay site at the Hythe more welcoming and interesting for students and others to use this area, and the links this has with walking and cycling routes to Wivenhoe and Rowhedge.
- Build on progress made with the ‘Get Monkwick Moving’ project to **improve signposting along the offroad walking and cycling route from Monkwick to the city centre.**
- **Delivering improvements identified along the Fixing the Link route** as detailed in paragraph 5.6.
- **Continue the development of the Recycling and Waste Strategy** that will help align the Council’s waste collections with requirements of the Environment Act, alongside delivering a service that is more efficient and financially sustainable.
- Work with the University of Essex and the Business Improvement District (BID) to **identify ways to raise awareness and create support for businesses to reduce their use of single-use plastics.** Ideas being looked at are research into alternative materials to be used instead of single-use plastics for common plastic items used by businesses, creation of awareness materials and an award scheme for businesses taking action to reduce their use of single-use plastics.
- Work with **Essex County Council and other public sector partners with the creation of an Essex wide communications campaign** to increase environmental awareness and promote actions that can be taken to reduce environmental impacts, along with other co-benefits such as saving money and improving health.

- Developing **three new supplementary planning documents (SPDs) on active travel, climate change and biodiversity**. These SPDs all help to outline expected best practice in terms of environmental sustainability. The biodiversity SPD has now been published for consultation, and the other two SPDs are nearing the final draft stage.
- **Supporting delivery of further domestic energy efficiency grant schemes** such as phase 4 of the Energy Company Obligation Flex (ECO4) scheme and potentially phase 2 of the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) scheme. The Office for gas and electricity markets (Ofgem) hold the funding for ECO4 which is sourced from medium and large energy suppliers who are obligated to provide measures to support low-income, fuel poor and vulnerable households with reducing energy use. HUG2 is a government funded scheme, specifically focussing on improving the energy efficiency and decarbonisation of homes off the gas grid (i.e. their main heating fuel isn't gas). CCC was part of a consortia bid with other Essex local authorities for this funding stream and is waiting to hear back on the outcome of this application.

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.

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 from this report. Many of the projects being undertaken will have positive impacts that support increased physical and mental health

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.