

**REPORT TO: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY  
COMMITTEE AND WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT  
COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 21 September 2021**

**REPORT TITLE: PRINCIPLES FOR A REFRESHED CLIMATE  
EMERGENCY AMBITION**

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### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 This report provides an overview of the principles for refreshing the ambition for climate emergency and how these principles will be implemented.

### **Impact of Covid-19 pandemic**

2 The Combined Authority has actively reviewed its key activities and work programme to reflect changing priorities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Specific issues relating to the Covid-19 situation that impact on or are addressed through this report are as follows:

- Providing renewed ambition for climate emergency and supporting the principles of clean and inclusive growth
- Taking action in lead up to COP26 to support businesses to decarbonise (and improve productivity)

### **Recommendation**

#### **Recommendation for West of England Combined Authority Committee:**

- Approve the creation of an interim Environment Director, with a view to recruiting to this post on a permanent basis in the medium term.

#### **Recommendation for West of England Joint Committee:**

- Agree the principles for a revised ambition to address the climate emergency.

## **Background / Issues for Consideration**

### **Context**

As a Combined Authority, our adopted strategies are already focussed on delivering against our climate ambitions for the region to be net zero by 2030 and to adapt to the effects of climate change. These include:

- Local Industrial Strategy
- Spatial Development Strategy
- Joint Local Transport Plans – including Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans, approaches to Electric Vehicles and their charging infrastructure
- Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan
- Tree & Woodland Strategy

However, now is the time for increased ambition to reduce emissions and protect the environment. The message is clear on a regional, national and international level, we need to take further and faster action if we are to meet our ambitions.

Climate change poses a clear and urgent challenge, affecting our future environment and prosperity of our region. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's [IPCC] recommendations are clear – limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees [rather than 2 degrees] between now and 2052 will significantly reduce the effects of global warming.

The most recent report from the IPCC (August 2021) confirms that we are not on target to meet this ambition. Unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach.<sup>1</sup>

Stabilising the climate will require strong, rapid, and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and reaching net zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Limiting other greenhouse gases and air pollutants, especially methane, could have benefits both for health and the climate<sup>2</sup>

### **Scale of challenge and Regional Targets**

The scale of the challenge ahead of us to reduce emissions, protect the environment and reach carbon neutrality by 2030 is daunting. We know that:

- In 2018, the region produced 5,154kt of CO<sub>2</sub>. This represents 4.5 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per person, compared with 5.2 tonnes per person across the UK
- Transport and buildings are the biggest sources of emissions in the region. 26% of the region's emissions come from business and the public sector, 30% from homes and buildings, and 44% from transport.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2021/08/IPCC\\_WGI-AR6-Press-Release\\_en.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2021/08/IPCC_WGI-AR6-Press-Release_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2021/08/IPCC\\_WGI-AR6-Press-Release\\_en.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2021/08/IPCC_WGI-AR6-Press-Release_en.pdf)

- 84% of crops and 80% of wildflowers rely on insect pollination, yet half of the nation's 27 bumble bee species are in decline and three of them have already gone extinct.

In order to meet our 2030 ambitions, we know that we will need to:

- Cut 464kt of CO<sub>2</sub> each year (10% of today's total) in order to reach net zero by the end of 2030.

To do this, we will need to:

- retrofit 250,000 homes and 8,000 non-residential properties by 2030 in order to meet our carbon neutral ambitions.
- Protect wildlife – including increasing pollinator habitats
- Decarbonise transport system, providing a genuine alternative to the car and improving cycling/walking.

### **Principles for a refreshed ambition**

The ambition for the region to be carbon neutral by 2030 and the original priority action areas of the existing plan still stand. The current action plan highlights five key priority areas for the region to take action:

1. Accelerating the shift to low carbon transport
2. Improving our buildings & placemaking
3. Enabling clean smart affordable energy
4. Fostering Clean Growth & Innovation
5. Protecting, preserving & enhancing the environment

In light of new and emerging evidence, we want to take a more ambitious approach to delivering this. To help guide this new ambitious approach, we are developing a set of principles that will guide our action and help inform the decisions we make to ensure that we are reducing emissions and protecting the environment. As a combined authority and regional leader, we commit to:

- Take action now on the highest sources of emissions and where we can have most impact as a combined authority - buildings retrofit, decarbonising transport, increasing green infrastructure, working with businesses to reduce their emissions and working to increase the amount of renewable and community energy within the region.
- Make the hard decisions to cut emissions and protect the environment - we know that cutting emissions and protecting the environment will require taking hard decisions that will change the way we live and work in the region. We are not afraid to take these decisions and need our unitary authorities, residents and businesses to make the same tough decisions.
- Take a data led approach – providing metrics to fully understand the impact of actions taken and decisions made where the data is available. However, we recognise that the data to support some decisions is still in development. Where this is the case, we will not let lack of certainty be used as ground for inaction or the avoidance of risk.

- Ensure that we are adapting to the effects of climate change by protecting the natural environment and ensuring climate resilience in the built environment, infrastructure projects.
- Facilitate a just transition – working to promote the green skills and high quality jobs within a low carbon economy. Ensuring that the decisions that we take do not adversely affect specific social groups.

As a combined authority, we do not have all the levers of influence to effect change so will need our unitary authorities and key stakeholders to work together to help us deliver this ambition.

## **COP26**

COP26 is an opportunity to demonstrate West of England's leadership and ambition to a national / global audience, in the run up to the conference in Glasgow we will

- Launch Solar Together – a programme to increase the amount of solar energy generated within the region with the aim of enabling. It targets 100,000 homes in the region and hopes to save 900 tonnes of CO2 per year.
- Work with Planet Mark and UWE to host the Carbon Zero battle bus for an audience of 150 SMEs to inspire them to decarbonise their operations and buildings
- Creating a £20m Green Recovery Fund to support ambitions on climate emergency and economic growth.
- Working with South West Energy Hub and Low Carbon Challenge Fund to increase the amount of clean energy in the region and develop case studies to show case innovation and best practice within the region.
- Supporting South West Energy Hub and Unitary Authorities for plans to host Green Zone activities and relay events held at COP26 across the region and to local communities
- taking part in University of West of England Digital Engineering Technology and Innovation net zero youth summit, aimed at engaging sixth formers and promoting how engineering can help reach net zero.

## **Developing a Climate and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan**

The Combined Authority will work with regional stakeholders and the Unitary Authorities to develop a revised Climate and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan to deliver these ambitions. This plan will outline strategic objectives for each key action area and focus on specific priorities to deliver against targets. The strategic objectives will provide the long term vision of the region will transition towards net zero and adapt to the effects of climate change. The actions will be more specific and time-bound in order to better target our resources and monitor progress. The more time-specific actions will be reviewed on a regular basis and included in the regular updates to Committee on progress towards the climate emergency ambitions.

The revised Strategy and Action Plan will build on the good work in the existing one, covering the five priority action areas outlined in the original plan and including a greater focus on adaptation. It will be clearer and more definite in its language, using clear verbs and avoiding too many qualifiers.

It will also provide greater clarification on the extent to which the Combined Authority has the levers to deliver on specific action, and where they sit with others. This will help improve understanding and facilitate partnership working amongst the Combined Authority, Unitary Authorities and key partners and stakeholders.

Whilst the revised Strategy and Action Plan will provide strategic objectives and priorities, the clear focus will be on taking action and working together to create the conditions for and enable systemic transformational change across the region. Setting out a clear strategy and objectives is important, but this should not stand in the way of acting now where we know that change needs to happen.

The actions contained within the revised Plan will be produced in partnership with key stakeholders including Unitary Authorities and will build a route map for between now and 2030 to identify what needs to happen in order to realise our ambitions. This will help to ensure clarity in the roles that each partner plays and to deliver SMART goals that will support effective monitoring.

The revised Strategy and Action Plan will consider further governance methods and systems to ensure that climate and nature impact/benefit assessments are embedded in the Combined Authority decision making processes, with clear decision-making routes across disciplines through to leaders, both of which are supported by partner UA processes.

The revised Strategy and Action Plan will be developed in conjunction with the aims and ambitions of existing strategies and regional ambitions, including:

- Local Industrial Strategy
- Spatial Development Strategy
- Joint Local Transport Plans – including Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans, approaches to Electric Vehicles and their charging infrastructure
- Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan
- Tree & Woodland Strategy

## **Realising the revised ambition**

To support and inform the development of a revised Strategy and Action Plan, the Combined Authority will establish a Climate Board for the region.

The Board will initially be tasked with developing the revised Plan in line with refreshed ambition. It will also provide senior oversight and accountability on workstreams and projects related to the delivery of the Action Plan, raising the profile of climate emergency workstreams within the combined authority and across the region.

Whilst detailed terms of reference will need to be developed, over the longer term, the Board will be asked to:

- Inform, advise and support the development of regional policy and actions related to climate and ecological emergency.
- Use their industry/sector expertise to deliver projects that will reduce emissions or protect biodiversity
- Lead in behaviour change and encourage others to take action on climate change
- Support the combined authority in lobbying government for further devolution or regulation to help enable the transition to net zero
- Assist in the development of the progress reports to committee on regional progress towards the climate emergency ambitions.
- Share best practice from their sectors to reduce emissions and protect nature.
- Help to inform the delivery of the Green Recovery Fund

The Board will be chaired by the Metro Mayor and include representatives from industry leaders and others with a key role in reducing the region's emissions and supporting delivery of biodiversity objectives, as well as the regional unitary authorities. This will include partners from the community and voluntary sectors, resident and youth groups, and the business board.

Board membership will be representative of the region's population, be sufficiently diverse, and include representation spanning the five key areas of the existing Action Plan (transport, buildings, business & skills, green environment and renewable energy). Where possible, Board members will hold senior positions within their organisations or community and will be used to leading and delivering on high-profile projects. Membership of the board will be developed in consultation with our unitary authorities but suggested members could include:

- Representative from West of England Nature Partnership
- Representatives from young people/groups
- Representative from energy infrastructure
- Technical/advisory expertise
- Finance representatives
- Government agency representatives e.g DEFRA, Environment Agency
- Transport provider representative e.g FirstBus or GWR
- UA elected members with responsibility for Climate Change

The regional coverage and remit of the Board will make it unique, but it will work in conjunction with expert panels already operating within the region where appropriate.

A detailed draft Terms of Reference for the Board will be developed by officers in consultation with the Unitary Authorities and Chief Executives. The Terms of Reference will confirm the scope of the board and how it will sit alongside the existing governance structures for the Combined Authority. Given the cross-cutting nature of the climate emergency and its wide-ranging implications, the Board will support the work of both the Combined Authority and the Joint Committees and help to inform decisions taken by them on funding.

The Board and the development of the revised Plan will be driven by a new Environment Director for the region working in conjunction with the new Board, who collectively will support the Metro Mayor in driving his ambition. This role will be funded using existing funds dedicated to realising Mayoral manifesto commitments agreed at June 2021 committee. This post will initially be appointed on an interim basis, in recognition of the need to deliver at pace. Over the medium term, we will seek to make this position permanent and work in conjunction with CEOs to agree this.

The Director position will be part of the combined authority's Senior Management Team and will be tasked with working closely with the new Board to and across the combined authority and with the Unitary Authorities and key stakeholders to develop the revised Action Plan.

We will aim to launch the new Board in November 2021 with the first meeting of the being held during COP26. The Board will then have the aim of working with key stakeholders to deliver a new action plan in Spring 2021.

### **Consultation**

3 There is no statutory consultation required in the development of these papers.

### **Other Options Considered**

4 Not revising the ambition for the climate emergency action plan – not revising our approach and ambition for addressing the climate emergency would mean that we are unlikely to achieve our carbon neutrality ambitions. As such, we have not taken this option forward.

### **Risk Management/Assessment**

5 A full risk assessment will be developed in alongside the revision of the Action Plan and creation of the Climate Board.

### **Public Sector Equality Duties**

6 The public sector equality duty created under the Equality Act 2010 means that public authorities must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected

characteristic and those who do not.

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

6.1 The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

6.2 The general equality duty therefore requires organisations to consider how they could positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations. It requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of policies and the delivery of services, including policies, and for these issues to be kept under review.

6.3 No equality implications are anticipated as a result of this report but a full equality impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the revision of the action plan.

### **Finance Implications, including economic impact assessment where appropriate:**

7 There are no financial implications directly attributable to this report. Drawdown of Combined Authority funding, in order to deliver ambitions as stated within the report, will require Committee approval and relevant business case development.

Funding for the proposed Director of Environment post will be sourced through the £1m that was allocated by Committee in June 2021 for additional regional recovery work.

Advice given by: Malcolm Coe – Director of Investment and Corporate Services.

### **Legal Implications:**

8 The legislation and guidance in relation to climate emergency will need to be kept under review as the actions outlined are implemented. This will ensure that the Combined Authority is complying with its statutory obligations

Advice given by: Shahzia Daya, Director of Legal Services

### **Climate Change Implications**

9 On 19 July 2019, the West of England Combined Authority declared a climate

emergency, recognising the huge significance of climate change and its impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of the region's residents. The Combined Authority is committed to taking climate change considerations fully into account as an integral part of its governance and decision making process.

Each report/proposal submitted for Combined Authority / Joint Committee approval is assessed in terms of the following:

Will the proposal impact positively or negatively on:

- \* The emission of climate changing gases?
- \* The region's resilience to the effects of climate change?
- \* Consumption of non-renewable resources?
- \* Pollution to land, water or air?

Particular projects will also be subject to more detailed environmental assessment/consideration as necessary as part of their detailed project-specific management arrangements

- 9.1 This report outlines an approach to increase the combined authority's ambition to address the climate emergency. Revising our climate emergency action plan will aim to increase the pace of decarbonisation within the region.

### **Human Resources Implications:**

- 10 The report proposes the creation of an Environment Director to lead this work for the region, and given the urgency, approval is sought to initially appoint an interim with the view to recruiting to this post substantively in the medium term. This will be an open and transparent process which will follow the Combined Authority's internal HR and recruitment policies.

Any additional administration required will be resourced from within the Combined Authority's current staffing base.

Advice given by: Alex Holly, Head of People and Assets

**Appendices:** None.

**Background papers:** None.

### **West of England Combined Authority Contact:**

Any person seeking background information relating to this item should seek the assistance of the contact officer for the meeting who is Ian Hird on 07436 600313; or by writing to West of England Combined Authority, 3 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6EW; email: [democratic.services@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

