

Communities and Environment Scrutiny Committee 17.7.24

1. Decarbonisation of Westmorland and Furness Estate.

Report by Michael Hanley.

Presentation

Target: Net zero by 2037. Annual greenhouse gas emissions: 84,551 tons CO₂. Equivalent to 9543 households. Will focus on: building fabric (heat loss), energy reduction (lighting, space heating, water heating), energy generation (renewables: solar, air source heat exchange, etc). All council maintained schools to receive a heat decarbonisation plan. Change to LED lighting. Leisure Centre decarbonisation: Focus on swimming pools and leisure centres, upgrade doors and windows and install solar panels.

Transport Workstreams: Placement of EV charging points. HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil) fuel store at Skirsgill Depot for Highway Fleet vehicles (£20-30k). Contractors for highways resurfacing also have to comply with carbon reduction: circa 23% reduction in carbon over next 6 years by use of electric fleet vehicles and other low carbon alternatives.

The council is currently developing two megawatts of electricity on its land at Sandscale Park in Barrow and Redhills near Penrith which will provide 1-2 megawatts. The Barrow one will cost £2.78 million. There will be 2162 solar panels. It is due to be completed on the 19th of September.

Discussion

P Thornton (PT, LD): Reducing carbon is quite expensive. It does put up council bills but in the long run it will be cheaper. A lot of our buildings are care homes and schools. We also have the council buildings.

Allan Harty (AH, Assistant Director of Corporate Assets, Fleet and Capital Programme)

The capital programme will cost half a billion pounds in the next five years. Discussed the Carbon Management Strategy: building, transport, supply chain and residual emissions. Building maintenance has been joined to the decarbonisation team. £8-10 million spent annually on maintaining buildings.

This is a great opportunity to introduce decarbonisation: increased insulation, solar panels, heat pumps, removal of gas boilers. Energy monitoring will be important with quarterly reports. There will be smart meters in all the schools. There is a procurement plan to switch to electric vehicles and those running on HVO. There will be penalties in contractor contracts if they miss the reduced carbon targets. There will be a push to using electric fleet vehicles. Voreda is the first retrofit passivhaus in Europe. There is a plan for 60 hectares of tree planting.

M Hanley (MH, L): Asked about WAFC electric vehicles and when will there be more of them?

AH: The move to EVs will be gradual.

G Simpkins (GS, LD): Asked about the monitoring of energy use in the schools and hydrogen powered vehicles.

AH: Discussed the monitoring. We are looking at hydrogen-power for the heavier vehicles.

G Archibald (GA, LD): We will be one of the early adopters.

N Hughes (NH, LD): We have tried to encourage our providers (contractors) to move to electric.

GA: This is an enormous amount of work. Some authorities have set targets that will not be achievable but we think that our targets are achievable. They will cost about £2 million per year.

L Baker (LB, LD): Asked about on-shore wind turbines.

AH: We may well have those.

J Derbyshire (JD, LD): Discussed work on public housing to improve insulation. Some tenants don't like being told they will have to have an air-source heat pump. Some people are objecting to the building of the Barrow solar farm on good agricultural land.

AH: It was not classed as agricultural land. We have done a lot of work to increase the biodiversity on the site.

JD: You cant get funding unless you take out all your fossil fuel sources including log burning stoves. In places like Alston when there is a power cut due to heavy snow, people will not want to give up their stoves.

GS: Asked about peat bogs.

GA: Yes, we need to look to restoration, WAFC has given more than £100k for this.

2 Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

JD: Discussed the work of CSP. It works very well and keeps us safe.

Presenter (P): Cumbria is a very safe place to live. The CSP involves five authorities: WAFC, Police, Fire Service, two ICBs (Integrated Care Boards, NHS) and NW Probation Service.

Discussed Anti-social behaviour and the use of the Community Trigger. Safer Cumbria in involved with local crime justice and combatting drug criminals and preventing radicalisation.

We need to focus on prevention. There is a CSP meeting every two months.

Operation Enhance: working with the police on 18 crime hotspots in the area with extra patrols.

Rural Crime Team: has brought in rural crime volunteers included mounted (on horses) police.

Road Safety: ASB driving, speeding. Working with probation on short term re-offenders.

MH: Asked about the election campaign claims of an incumbent Cumbrian MP, who claimed that recently there has been a huge increase in local police officers.

P: There are more in training but I don't know if there has been an increase of officers on the ground.

LB: Asked where prisoners are sent.

P: Offenders in the north are sent to the north east and those in the south are sent to the north west prisons.

JD: Most issues that come to Prevent in this area are to do with right wing groups (and not religious fundamentalism).

3 Waste Strategy.

Long term target: By 2042 total waste in this area does not exceed 287kg per capita. Interim target (2028): Not exceed 437kg per capita (not exceed 25 million tonnes).

Recent talks between DEFRA and packaging producers (Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility). Local authorities will receive payments for managing the costs of household packaging waste from April 25. There will be annual targets for recovering packaging waste. There will be Deposit Return Schemes. A deposit will be paid on a bottle and the deposit will be redeemed at a host point. It is hoped this will reduce littering. Defra plans to set a target of 90% of all in-scope material sold.

WAFC is responsible for waste collection and disposal. This used to be managed by the county council, through a 25 year contract with Renewi. There are waste transfer and mechanical biological treatment plants at Barrow and Carlisle as well as 7 household waste recycling centres (in WAFC area). In April 23 the contract was assigned to Cumberland Council.

Discussion

GA: We have adapted the waste practices of 4 authorities. We need to maintain the high level of Health and Safety (people have been killed in the past). We have a preference for doing things in-house, fortnightly collections, bins rather than bags. We need to review the recycling sites: some are overflowing, some abused by private businesses (who are not permitted to dispose their waste here). Our depots are not fit for purpose.

Anna Smith (AS, Assistant Director of Waste and Environmental Services):

There is a 25 year environment plan to reduce and minimise waste. This is based on reducing the amount in kilograms of waste produced by each person. We will also be looking at food waste. We also need to tackle waste related crime. At the moment dealing with waste is the total responsibility of the council but in the future the makers of packaging will be involved. There may be additional funding from the producers of the products causing waste. DEFRA will manage this. Funding will come in at the end of 2026.

Deposit schemes will come back. The recycling streams are: glass, metal, plastic, paper/card, food and garden waste. Currently we are working through an options plan. We will be benchmarking against other authorities: North Yorkshire and Northamptonshire.

MH: Asked what happens to plastic waste. Is it exported to Turkey or elsewhere?

AS: It goes to a shredding plant in Carlisle. We could organise a visit to the plant.

GA: That's a very good point. We need to make this known to the public.

GS: What happens when the recycling goes into the collecting truck. It isn't all being mixed or is it being kept separate?

AS: No, its kept separate.

GA: We will have to consult the public on the method of collection. We need stronger communication of what we are doing. The point that has been made is that it is a service that affects everyone. The bring sites are sometimes a mess, they are exploited by commercial users. We will have to have a review.

End of meeting.