



Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee

29 January 2025

Title:	Climate Programme Delivery
Report of:	Judith Barker, Executive Director, Place and Connectivity
Lead Member:	Cllr Bridget Smith, Lead Member Communities and Environment
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	No Key Decisions
Voting Arrangements:	No vote required

Recommendations:

A	To note the progress on the Climate Action Plan review.
B	To note the progress on the Climate Programme and on funding projects in line with the Single Assurance Framework.
C	To note the update on the Opportunity Fund bidding round.

Strategic Objective(s):

The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):

x	Enabling resilient communities
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1. Purpose

1.1	<p>The purpose of this paper is to provide the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee (E&SCC) with an update on three key elements of the Climate Change Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress with the Climate Action Plan review• Status of the current Climate Action Programme - 2024/25• The development and delivery of the Opportunity Fund and bidding round
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2. Background

2.1	<p>The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee considered progress with the Climate Action Plan review at its December meeting.</p> <p>It noted that there was a need to align activity on the Action Plan review with the new activity on responding to the government's Local Growth Plan proposals.</p> <p>An informal ESC workshop will be held on the Local Growth Plan to discuss the approach to sustainability in February.</p>
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2.2	A key evidence base for the Climate Action plan review is the Locally Determined Contributions project. An update was also requested on the Locally Determined Contributions project and its development of a toolkit, and this is on today's Agenda.
2.3	We present the latest progress on Climate Programme delivery, including project approvals, committed funding and proposed project funding.
2.4	Members noted the Climate Opportunity Fund has opened, with formal applications to be submitted by 17 January 2025. An update is provided below.

3. Climate Action Plan review update

3.1	<p>The Climate Action Plan review timetable needs to align with the requirement by government for the Combined Authority to prepare a Local Growth Plan (LGP). The LGP and specific investment proposals need to respond to climate and nature issues, and similarly the Climate Action Plan needs to understand and respond to the growth ambitions.</p> <p>This 'positive challenge' approach will be supported by jointly procuring impact evidence, such as how it would affect the carbon budget. Workstreams will be combined where possible to make best use of available resources and ensure synergy. Further guidance is expected from government in the form of a remit letter on the LGP by early February and a verbal update will be given if that guidance is provided prior to the meeting and then discussed at the February workshop.</p>
	Cambridgeshire Local Area Energy Plan, Climate Change Risk Assessment and LDC projects are underway that provide the evidence for the Climate Review and Local Growth Plan review. Appropriate changes to delivery timetables in two of these projects are in paragraph 4.2 below.
3.2	The Committee has been presented with progress on the Local Determined Contribution project earlier on the agenda. Workshops will be taking place in January and February to refine the emerging toolkit. The toolkit can be used to inform the best approach to determining the area's carbon budget, and pathways to achieving that carbon budget.
3.3	<p>As part of the Climate Action Plan review a data and evaluation workstream has been created and officers involved in this group have been meeting regularly.</p> <p>This group is responsible for defining the scope of the evidence and data needed, including using the outputs of the LDC framework to make recommendations on the methodological approach to setting an overarching carbon budget and associated targets. It is intended to use the draft LDC framework in January to scope the evidence required, and to refine the specification once the LDC toolkit has been further tested by partners in February.</p>
3.4	Given the desire to align the Local Growth Plan and Climate Action Plan processes, launching the external engagement on the Review has been paused to allow the requirements on the Local Growth Plan to be confirmed by government. Activity and expenditure on this is deferred into 2025/26 FY.

4. Update on the Climate Action Programme 2024/25

4.1	<p>There has been significant progress in moving the climate programme forward over 2024. To illustrate this, the reporting has been split into three tables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 1 – Projects in delivery – these projects have agreements in place, are in delivery and are spending against the funding received. These projects total £6,944,031 Capital and £2,023,974 Revenue. • Table 2 – Projects approved – these are recently approved projects in the process of finalising agreements. These projects total £2,950,000 Capital and £422,200 Revenue. • Table 3 – Projects in development – these projects are at concept or business case development stage and need to will go through the relevant stages of the Single Assurance Framework for funding consideration. These projects have funding allocated 'subject to approval' that total £1,366,000 Capital and £949,000 Revenue. <p>The Tables are RAG-rated on an overall assessment of progress/delivery risk.</p>
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	<p>With the most recently approved projects in Table 1 and 2, the Climate Programme is currently delivering projects totalling £9,894,031 Capital and £2,446,174 Revenue. This total includes those projects with approved expenditure profiled over more than one year of the current MTFP period, so represents the total committed to the end of 2027/28 FY. In addition, there is an allocation for project management, which is being deployed on Programme Management support. The Financial Monitoring report scheduled for the Committee’s February meeting will provide the current spend and forecasts for individual projects.</p> <p>The Combined Authority Board is considering the Medium-Term Financial Plan at its meeting on 22 January. For the Climate Capital Programme, the MTFP allocates £5,469,000 for 25/26 FY, of which £4,144,000 is currently committed. The remaining £1,325,000 would be available for deployment in 25/26. An update on the future budget position will be brought as part of the Financial Monitoring report.</p>
4.2	<p>Three Project Change Requests have been agreed by the Combined Authority since the last Committee meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network – the Investment Committee on 13 January approved a revised delivery date for the Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network from March 2025 to December 2026, with construction scheduled to commence by October 2025 with grant spend taking place in both 2025/26 and 2026/27. • Climate Change Risk Assessment – change request approved in January 2025 to move the completion date from 31 July to 30 September 2025. This was due to the project scope needing to be reconsidered in light of other risk evidence becoming available (e.g. Future Fens Integrated Adaptation) and the need to align with the Local Growth Plan development. • Cambridgeshire Local Area Energy Plan – change request approved in January 2025 to move the completion date from 31 July to 31 December 2025. This was due to the external tendering process and agreeing the technical specification.
4.3	<p>Two projects were approved since the last Committee:</p> <p>1. Peat Soil Affected Roads</p> <p>The Peat Soil Affected Roads business case was approved at the Investment Committee meeting on 16 December 2024. It is an action under the Transport workstream in the Climate Action Plan. The project is led by Cambridgeshire County Council who will trial innovative solutions to address the continuing maintenance and safety problems related to roads constructed over fenland soil deposits. This will inform future investment in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area as well inform the work of other Highways Authorities across the wider fens landscape region into Norfolk and Lincolnshire.</p> <p>2. Digital Connectivity</p> <p>In 2025/26 CPCA is supporting the work of Connecting Cambridgeshire to address digital inclusion and ensure economic growth is supported, whilst reducing transport emissions. This was approved by the Investment Committee on 16 December 2024.</p> <p>The original ask was for over £1m from the uncommitted climate programme but, in liaison with E&SCC chair, this sum was reduced to £0.5m and ensured the focus and monitoring on climate mitigation and adaptation. This will be illustrated in the business plan from Connecting Cambridgeshire which will be received in February. The overall total was reduced and the CPCA Economy and Growth Directorate have identified £0.5m from their budget to support the continuation of this project. This will enable us to deliver positive outcomes for the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee.</p>

Table 1 – Projects in delivery

Project	Enabling Resilient Communities	Status
Care Homes	By providing capital investment to decarbonise independent care home estates.	<p>Building Workstream Project funding reduced due to demand. Two care homes have been funded under the programme, one large project at Soham Lodge and a smaller project at Paxton Hall.</p> <p>Capital funding: £101,031 Claim forms have been submitted and funding fully claimed.</p>

Schools retrofit - Low carbon Heating	By providing three local maintained schools to come off fossil fuels for their heating contributing to the area achieving Net Zero ambitions.	Buildings Workstream Funding committed and in delivery with completion date of June 2025 Capital funding: £363,000
Domestic energy and efficiency - Phase 1	By retrofitting low-income homes in conjunction with government funding via the home Upgrade Grant, through the installation of energy efficient measures and low carbon heating.	Buildings workstream In delivery. Project approved end November 2024. Completion due 31 July 2025. Capital funding: £950,000.
Cambridgeshire LAEP (Plan development)	Through the development of a Local Area Energy Plan for Cambridgeshire which will contribute to the unlocking of an estimated £15bn of early investment in energy infrastructure over the next 20 years to achieve Net Zero.	Energy Workstream Change request agreed in January. Completion date December 2025. Stakeholder engagement contract has been awarded. The Technical procurement been tendered and due to be awarded by end of Feb. Revenue funding: £260,000
Climate Opportunity Fund	By allowing Public Sector and community organizations to bid to CPCA for investment ready projects that deliver the Climate Change Action Plan priorities	Engagement Workstream Programme Business Case approved at October 2024. Funding call launched and currently assessing applications to the Fund. An update is provided in Section 5 below. Successful applications to be confirmed by March 2025. Expenditure due by March 2026. Programme allocation (capital): £1,000,000
Net Zero Villages	By providing funding to local community groups to decarbonise and improve nature. Funding through local authority partners.	Engagement Workstream Four authorities' programmes in delivery. Final programme being prepared for launch. End date for projects is 28 Feb 2026. Progress reporting on initial launch of the local programmes is a requirement and a condition for release of second stage payments. Capital funding: £1,000,000.
Doubling Nature Matrix	By creating a robust baseline of priority habitats for the region to inform local policy and strategy that will help measure doubling nature.	Nature Workstream In delivery with planned completion January 2026. Revenue funding: £91,000 Claimed to date: revenue £56,670 .
Greater Cambridge Chalk Streams	By establishing and implementing a programme of case studies projects using an evidence-based approach to showcase holistic solutions for restoring Greater Cambridge chalk streams and their associated riparian habitats.	Nature Workstream Delivery commenced with agreed planned completion March 2026 Capital funding: £300,000 Revenue funding £120,000
Local Nature Recovery Strategy	By delivering a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the area.	Nature Workstream In delivery. Revised completion date due in December 2025. Progress dependent on revised technical evidence being presented in January. Revenue funding: £307,974

Logan's Meadow	By creating new wetland habitat to improve public access and reconfigure public amenity spaces.	<p>Nature Workstream In delivery with agreed completion November 2026. Contractors aiming to begin mid-January subject to weather conditions. Grant to be claimed in full by 30 November 2026.</p> <p>Capital funding: £280,000</p>
Huntingdonshire Biodiversity for all	By improving nature and biodiversity, empower the community and improve skills.	<p>Nature Workstream In delivery with completion due July 2025. Progress to be reviewed at February Project Board.</p> <p>Capital funding: £1,200,000 Revenue: £150,000</p> <p>Claimed to date: Capital £318,853 and revenue £103,482</p>
Nature and Environment Investment Fund	By establishing a Fund to attract additional investment into nature-based projects, building local capacity in green investment, and deliver projects on the ground across the CPCA area.	<p>Nature Workstream In delivery. Fund has drawn down £500,000 and launched both large and small grants schemes. Planned second round of applications with planned commitment of funding by July 2025.</p> <p>Capital funding: £1,000,000</p>
Natural Cambridgeshire capacity	By providing capacity funding to our local nature partnership (Natural Cambridgeshire), to champion the improvement of the area's natural environment.	<p>Nature Workstream In delivery. Support for Natural Cambridgeshire was extended to March 2026, with additional funding in 24/25 and new funding in 25/26.</p> <p>Revenue funding (24/25 to 25/26): £250,000</p>
Fenland Soil	By providing capacity funding to Fenland Soil, enabling them to bring together farmers and academics to address the impact of climate on our vulnerable Fens soils.	<p>Nature Workstream In delivery with £60,000 funding per annum agreed up to 31 March 2026.</p> <p>Revenue funding £120,000</p>
Climate Review	<p>By reviewing the current Climate Action Plan and producing a plan for 2025-2030 to enable future CPCA business planning to adapt to climate change and meet Net Zero targets.</p> <p>Funding three projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally Determined Contributions • Climate Action Plan Review • Climate Risk Assessment 	<p>Evaluation and Monitoring/Research Workstream Climate Change Risk Assessment agreed completion date September 2025. In pre-procurement stage.</p> <p>Local Determined Contributions in delivery. Completion date July 2025.</p> <p>Climate Action Plan Review business case approved. Completion December 2025 (to be reviewed in light of Local Growth Plan timetable).</p> <p>Revenue funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally Determined Contributions - £20,000 • Climate Action Plan Review - £200,000 • Climate Risk Assessment - £230,000 • Climate evidence (unallocated) - £98,000 <p>No claims were due as of January 2025.</p>
WRE membership	By supporting collaborative, cross-sector approach to water resources and integrated water management planning for the region.	<p>Water Workstream Continued annual funding up to 31 March 2029.</p> <p>Revenue funded: £15,000 per annum</p>
Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network (WREN)	By decarbonising the waste fleet by installing a solar array and battery storage on site.	<p>Waste Workstream WREN revised completion 31 December 2026.</p> <p>Capital allocated: £2,700,000</p> <p>No claims due as of January 2025.</p>

Infrastructure Delivery Framework	By identifying infrastructure challenges that will inform the emerging Local Growth Plan.	Project completed and Infrastructure Delivery Report published. Revenue funded: £130,000 Funding fully claimed.
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Table 2 – projects approved

Project	Enabling Resilient Communities	Status
Extending "Retrofitting your Home" Guidance	Through the review and extension of the Cambridge City Council's guidance to encompass housing archetypes so that it can be used by all authorities across the area.	Buildings workstream Project approved November 2024. Completion due by December 2025. Revenue funding: £72,200
Constituent council's Biodiversity	By funding biodiversity audits on council land assets, enabling development of biodiversity improvement plans supporting the Doubling Nature vision, including delivery aspects of the CPCA's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (due 2025).	Nature Workstream Programme approved September 2024. One council in delivery. Revenue funding: £350,000 (£50,000 for each of the seven authorities)
Peat Soil Affected Road (aka Fen roads Trial)	By trialling innovative solutions to address the continuing maintenance and safety problems related to roads constructed over fenland soil deposit.	Transport Workstream Business Case Approved at Investment Committee on 16 December 2024. Trial extends to March 2028. Capital Funding: £1,500,000
Digital connectivity	By delivering future facing, long lasting digital infrastructure that will ensure that digital connectivity is available to all.	Business Case approved at Investment Committee on 16 December 2024 for additional delivery period to end 25/26 FY. Capital Funding: £500,000

Table 3 – projects in concept/business case development stage

Project	Enabling Resilient Communities	Status
City of Cambridge Greening of outdoor event location	By removing the need to use fossil fuel and to install permanent electricity for events and sourcing from a green tariff, proving a low carbon energy solution.	Energy Workstream Concept being reevaluated by Cambridge City in light of other investment projects. MTFP subject to approval (capital): £366,000 MTFP subject to approval (revenue): £231,000

Sustainable Land Use Advice (Rewilding)	By providing funding to support farmer engagement with landscape-scale solutions, a biodiversity register and support for accessing the Nature Fund.	Nature Workstream Deployment linked to progress on LNRS. Reassessing concept to support LNRS delivery. MTFP subject to approval (revenue): £150,000
Sustainable infrastructure	By identifying infrastructure challenges that will inform the emerging Local Growth Plan.	All Workstreams The Infrastructure Delivery Framework report was approved at CA Board 13 November 2024. The Sustainable Infrastructure programme allocation of £400,000 is to support interventions informed by that framework. This programme will be designed alongside the work on the Local Growth Plan and deployment will be deferred to 25/26 FY. MTFP subject to approval (revenue): £400,000
Future Fens	By supporting Future Fens Integrated Adaptation (FFIA) Project that will protect the Fens from the impacts of climate change from flooding and drought.	Water Workstream Concept being reevaluated with FFIA partners. MTFP subject to approval (revenue): £70,000

5. Opportunity Fund Bidding Round

5.1	As members are aware the Opportunity Fund was launched in late November. This written update will be amplified at the Committee to provide as current a picture as possible in advance of an informal meeting of the Committee on 7 February where members will have the opportunity to comment on those applications which are being taken forward for approval.
5.2	<p>The Fund was launched through a series of briefing sessions aimed at potential applicants to encourage the submission of expressions of interest and to offer group and 121 support with the preparation of submissions.</p> <p>The closing date for expressions of interest was 7 January 2025 and at that point 46 expressions were received.</p>
5.3	<p>Applications closed on Friday 17 January at 5:00pm and 29 applications were received. The applications are with the independent appraisers for scoring and will be returned to CPCA at the end of January. ESC informal workshop is on Friday 7 February 2025.</p> <p>On Wednesday 12 February 2025, the Investment Panel meet and will review the scored list of applications together with comments from ESC. Any additional information from applicants will be requested and received. On Monday 10 March 2025 the Investment Committee will meet to ratify the list of grants to be approved. The CPCA Board will be updated on progress on 19 March 2025, followed by notification of outcomes to the applicants.</p>

6. Appendices

6.1	None.
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7. Implications

Financial Implications

7.1 The projects are contained within the existing Climate budgets.

Legal Implications

7.2 Grant Funding Agreements will be required for each Business Case that involves external partners leading on delivery.

Public Health Implications

7.3 Tackling emissions and impacts of climate change can have significantly positive impacts on public health and future risks to health.

Environmental & Climate Change Implications

7.4 The Climate Action Plan is a key component of the Combined Authority's response to environmental and climate change impact.

Other Significant Implications

7.5 None.

Background Papers

7.6 [Climate Action Plan \(Revised\)](#)