

Report to: Scrutiny Committee



Date of Meeting 5th February 2026

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Climate Change Action Plan Review

Report summary:

A review of the Climate Change Action Plan, looking at actions achieved and impact on carbon emissions.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

1. That Scrutiny Committee note the progress made in achieving the actions specified in the Climate Change Action Plan 2024- 2025

Reason for recommendation:

To support the Council priority to move towards becoming Net-Zero

Officer: Matthew Blythe, Assistant Director, Environmental Health.
Matthew.blythe@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☒ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☒ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☒ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☒ Communications and Democracy
- ☒ Economy
- ☒ Finance and Assets
- ☒ Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities
- ☒ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change High Impact Whilst this report does not in itself have any direct impact on progress with delivery of the Council's actions, it is an important review of progress.

Risk: Medium Risk; Whilst this report does not in itself have any direct impact on progress with delivery of the Council's actions, as a Council priority there is an associated risk.

Links to background information

[EDDC Carbon Descent Plan](#)

List of Appendices

Appendix 1. Climate Change Action Plan with RAG Rating

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
 - ☒ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
 - ☒ Financially secure and improving quality of services
-

1. Introduction

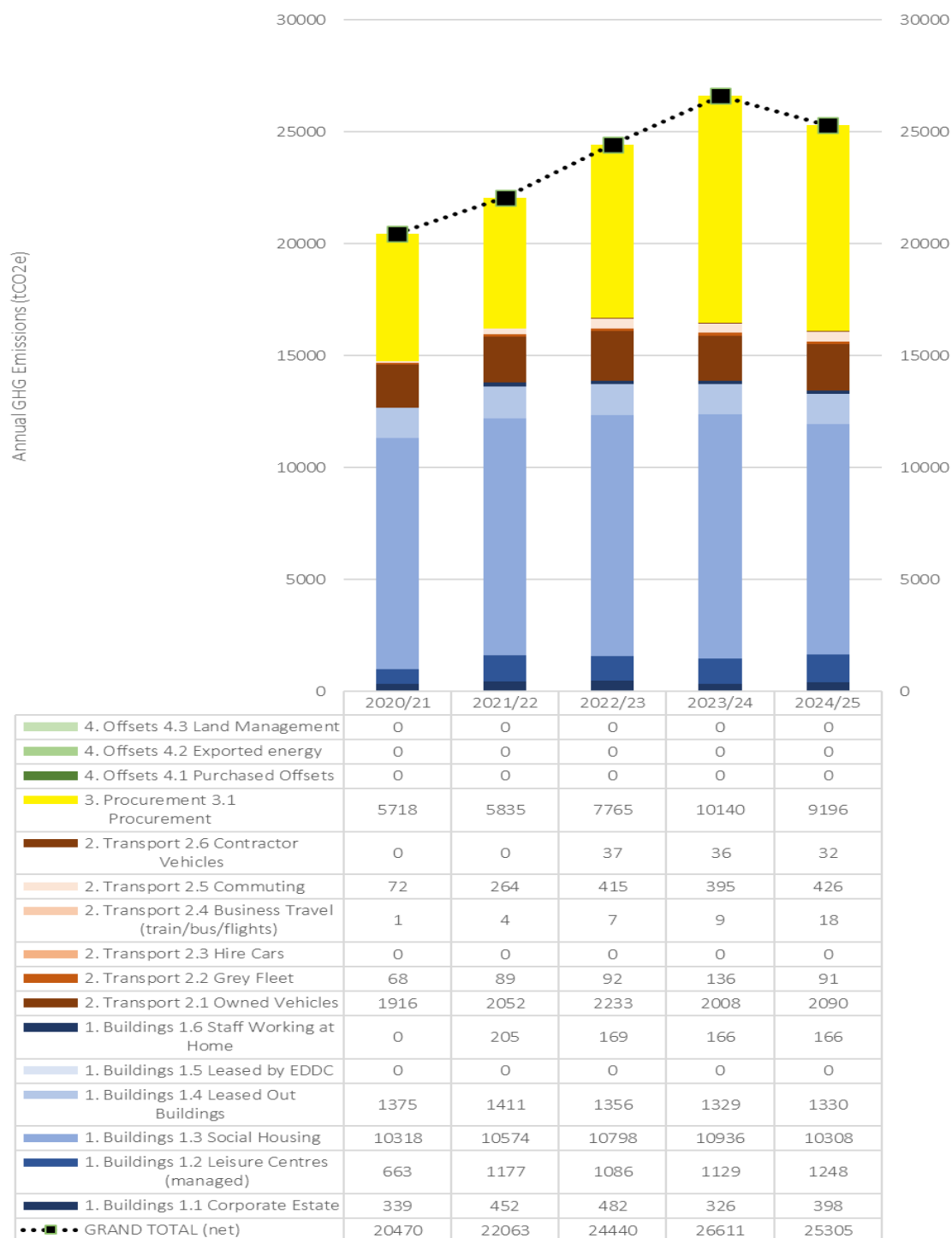
- 1.1. At Council on 24 July 2019, it was resolved that East Devon District Council would sign up to and endorse the Devon Climate Emergency Declaration, adopting a target of 2040 for carbon neutrality at the latest. Council also resolved to embed tackling the Climate Emergency as a key strategic priority of all parts of East Devon District Council and reflect this as a priority in the new Council Plan and future updates of Services Plans and relevant corporate policies.
- 1.2. At Council on 8 January 2020, it was resolved to adopt the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan as part of the Council's response to Devon's declaration of a Climate Emergency. The strategy sets out the Council's vision:

"To become a carbon neutral council working within a low carbon economy and lifestyle, reflected in our travel, homes, businesses, visitor experiences and communities."
- 1.3. Our overall target is to reduce our carbon emissions annually, and to be carbon neutral by 2040.
- 1.4. The Strategy and Action Plan were to be reviewed after five years (2025). This was completed and the plan is in the process of being adopted. The next step in this process is to have councillor feedback workshop sessions, which are planned for February/March 2026.
- 1.5. This report updates Scrutiny Committee on progress with the Climate Action Plan. It aims to analyse the level of achievement of actions, highlight where EDDC have made the most progress, reflect on challenges, lessons learnt and recommendations for approaches.

2. Current Position

- 2.1. Since our carbon footprint exercise in 2018/19 our carbon footprint has dropped significantly. However, in the intervening period the Covid19 pandemic meant a reduction in Council services and a commensurate reduction in calculated emissions. This has meant that since 2020/21 carbon emissions have risen due to a 'bounce back' effect, as services came back online. In 2020/21 our carbon footprint was 24,882 tonnes CO₂e and in 2023/24 it was 26,611 tonnes CO₂e.
- 2.2. In the most recent 2024/25 carbon footprint, the figure was 25,305 tonnes of CO₂e. This is a **4.9% reduction** from 2023/24.

Fig 1. EDDC Carbon Emissions 2020/21 – 2024/25



2.2 The majority of the longer-term change is due to an increase in emissions from procured goods and services which were 10,140 tCO₂e in 2023/24 and 7,765 tCO₂e in 2022/23 – a 2,375 tCO₂e increase. Again, this can be linked to the gradual return to business-as-usual post the pandemic. It should be noted that the calculation method used for procurement is very high level and strongly influenced by the amount of spend. It is recommended by SWEEG that more supplier-specific approaches are adopted going forward to give better accuracy.

- 2.3 Emissions associated with the supply chain (procurement 36.3% of the total) together with operational emissions from social housing (40.7%) continue make up the majority of the footprint.
- 2.4 In the 2024/25 footprint, procurement emissions dropped to 9196 tCO₂e, a 944 tonne / 9.3% reduction.
- 2.5 The Council has also seen a significant reduction in social housing emissions between 23/24 and 24/25 and smaller but significant reduction in grey fleet emissions (628 tonnes / 5.7% and 45 tonnes / 33% reduction from the previous year).
- 2.6 The overall reduction is positive.
- 2.7 The next carbon footprint exercise will take place in May 2026 and cover April 2025 to March 2026.

3. Key achievements

3.1. During 2024/25, the Council has continued to make tangible progress in delivering its climate change and environmental ambitions. In addition to the overall reduction in carbon emissions, there was activity spanning nature recovery, climate adaptation, decarbonisation, skills development, infrastructure investment and community engagement. Collectively, these actions demonstrate a whole-system approach to addressing climate change while delivering wider social, economic and environmental benefits for East Devon. The action plan has been reviewed and 'RAG' rated (Appendix 1). A summary of key actions are given below.

3.2. Actions Achieved:

- Drafted the updated Climate Change Strategy which outlines our commitment to climate change action and our vision for a Net Zero 2040.
- Drafted the updated Climate Change Action Plan derived from the Carbon Descent Plan, outlining the pathway to Net Zero by 2040. The Action Plan is a live document that sets out service specific actions that contribute to the overall strategy.
- Delivered Carbon Literacy Training to 36 Council officers and achieved full training accreditation for Catherine Causely and Brendan Carnell. Delivered the Welcome to Devon climate change presentations, to ensure that new starters are fully aware of the Council's commitment to addressing climate change.
- Engaged with all four Housing Tenant Participation events in 2025.
- Completed work for external review through the Climate Score Cards Organisation.
- Nature recovery, tree planting and climate adaptation have been a significant focus. It has been a particularly strong year for tree planting, to enhance green spaces, sequester carbon and support biodiversity. This included the planting of 3,000 trees supported by £25,000 of Section 106 funding, transferred to Saving Devon's Treescapes and match funded, delivering planting schemes in Poltimore and Broadclyst parishes. In addition, a third "tiny forest" was planted in Exmouth, delivering substantial biodiversity benefits while also slowing surface water flow onto the adjacent highway. This project was delivered in partnership with a local school and the wider community, with volunteer planters ranging in age from early years to older residents (6 to 93 years old), demonstrating strong intergenerational engagement.

- At Clyst Meadows, work is underway to deliver over 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, including new hedgerows and orchard planting, reprofiling of site ditches to capture surface water run-off, and management of meadows as coastal grazing marsh to enhance biodiversity. Flood resilience has also been improved through the opening of highway drainage near Shercroft Close and the incorporation of below-ground water storage beneath new crushed stone surfaces associated with the Mosshayne Lane to Station Road shared path and car park. Wherever possible, locally sourced, durable materials have been used to reduce embodied carbon and long-term maintenance requirements, including chestnut fencing from Dorset, crushed stone from Westleigh Quarry in Devon, and benches manufactured from fallen hardwoods by a Devon-based company. Volunteers have worked alongside the Council's site ranger to deliver planting and site works, with education events planned in partnership with Broadclyst Parish Council.
- Green infrastructure and strategic mitigation have also progressed. Cabinet approval was secured to invest Section 106 funding in Percy Wakley Woods as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), subject to lease arrangements with the Woodland Trust. This investment will improve access from the Grange phase of Cranbrook, connect to adjacent developer-provided SANG, and secure long-term positive management of the woodland. Alongside this, officers have continued to work with developers across Cranbrook and other growth areas to secure sustainable, in-perpetuity management of developer-provided SANG, delivering tree and hedgerow planting, biodiversity enhancement and community engagement in line with strategic mitigation requirements.
- The Council has also invested in the future supply of local trees through Green Team funding to support Broadclyst Tree Nursery, securing its operation for a further three years. This funding enables a part-time manager to coordinate volunteers and ensures a supply of locally grown trees for planting within East Devon, strengthening local resilience and reducing transport-related emissions. Looking ahead, work has begun on a Future Strategic SANG Delivery Plan (2025–2040), which will identify approximately 100 hectares of strategic SANG, alongside developer-delivered sites. This plan will integrate opportunities for active travel, climate mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity net gain, tree and hedgerow planting, inclusive access, health and wellbeing, and education. These ambitions are reinforced through strengthened green infrastructure policies within the emerging Local Plan, including support for the Clyst Valley Regional Park.
- Public electric vehicle infrastructure continues to expand, with EV chargers installed in 14 Council car parks during the year and a further 14 planned by 2026. Energy-intensive security lighting across Council assets is being replaced with LED alternatives, delivering an estimated 81% reduction in running costs and associated carbon emissions.
- Investment in businesses, communities and skills has remained a core priority. Year 3 delivery of the Carbon Action Fund supported 15 projects (seven businesses and eight community organisations), providing grant funding for decarbonisation equipment identified through carbon action planning. These projects are expected to deliver 80 tonnes of carbon savings per year. The Retrofit Skills Programme, delivered by Exeter College, supported 85 additional learners to gain net-zero-related skills and accreditations, strengthening the local retrofit supply chain and supporting economic transition. The Council has also commissioned and overseen a new £207,000 Carbon Action Programme, supporting East Devon businesses to understand their emissions and develop effective action plans. This programme includes diagnostics, workshops and tailored carbon footprinting and

complements existing Shared Prosperity Fund business support. Since July, 69 organisations have received one-to-one support and training, with 20 organisations completing detailed carbon footprint surveys and action plans.

- The Council funded the Community Action Group (CAG) project delivered strong results by supporting local community groups to deliver sustainability projects and drive community led projects. Groups engaged included local repair cafes, citizen science monitoring initiatives, rewilding and community food garden projects. The environmental impact of this work has been calculated at 150 tonnes carbon emissions avoided, 54 tonnes of waste prevented, and 35 tonnes of waste diverted away from landfill energy-from-waste. The value of volunteer time is estimated at £57,000. Due to the success of the partnership the Green Team approved an extension of a further 12 months.
 - Community engagement and access to nature have delivered strong outcomes. Seaton Wetlands welcomed almost 125,000 visitors in 2025, representing an 11% increase on the previous year, helping more residents and visitors connect with nature and understand the value of the natural environment. Volunteer involvement remains exceptional, with 6,327 volunteer hours recorded in 2025, equivalent to approximately £77,000 of contractor value, demonstrating the strength of community participation in environmental stewardship. Events run on the site had a 100% customer satisfaction score which is a tribute to the quality of the offering and included subjects such as bat watching, moth identification and wood carving. Working with SWEEG and Exmouth Town council, the Green Team funded a carbon footprint exercise and toolkit to reduce the impact of local events, this used Exmouth Festival as the pilot event, the findings of this work were then turned into a toolkit that can then be rolled out and used to reduce the impact of events that happen on our land.
 - Progress continues in the decarbonisation of housing, with 120 social housing properties identified to receive energy efficiency upgrades, including improvements to insulation, windows, heating. These improvements will reduce household energy bills, cutting carbon emissions and contributing to improved health and wellbeing for residents. 60 of these properties will see an uplift in their EPC rating from a D to a B.
- 3.3. Taken together, the activities delivered in 2024/25 demonstrate sustained progress towards the Council's climate and environmental objectives, with clear evidence of delivery, partnership working and community benefit. The programme of work continues to balance immediate action with longer-term strategic planning, ensuring East Devon is better prepared for the challenges and opportunities presented by climate change.

4. Lessons Learnt

- 4.1 In order for the Council to deliver on its commitment to becoming carbon neutral, the next Carbon Action Plan has been designed to be much 'SMARTer' with actions based on quantifiable carbon reduction over a specified time frame and wherever possible costed.
- 4.2 To this end the Council has been working with its partner Southwest Energy and Environment Group (SWEEG) to quantify the scale of the issue and they have produced a theoretical carbon descent plan (Appendix 1) which outlines a reasonable estimation of what can be achieved over the term of the next strategy based on assumptions on the use of available technology. This descent plan will be reviewed in 2027 to match progress against the theoretical descent target.
- 4.3 With the redesign of the carbon action plan, it aims to implement SMART-er targets, the aim is that carbon metrics and reporting schedules will be considered at the project inception

stage. This will give the opportunity for specialist advice to be sought, where required leading to better quantification of carbon metrics.

- 4.4 The setting up of the 'Green Team' in early 2023 was designed to give a corporate oversight of climate change, comprising senior officers from all services. Overall it has been successful in bringing together the different services, raising visibility of climate change, sharing knowledge and considering funding requests from the services (making recommendations to Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet where appropriate). In the period covering 2024/25 funding with a value of £252,000 was allocated to services to progress various climate related projects. We are reviewing its terms of reference relating to the Green Team to ensure its effectiveness going into Local Government Reorganisation.
- 4.5 Whilst there has been significant learning from the Council's first carbon action plan period, this should not undermine the excellent work carried out in specific areas, such as the progress being made with the decarbonisation of our fleet, increased work with the community on adaptation and mitigation, training and provision of 'green' grants to local business and residents. This work will build in momentum as the new climate action plan is adopted after gaining councillor insight.

5. Challenges

- 5.1. Local Government Reorganisation required a review of approach.
- 5.2. A restructure of the Governance Directorate will see Climate Change move here from Housing and Environmental Health.
- 5.3. In mid-2025 a new Climate Change Manager post was introduced. Unfortunately, recruitment was unsuccessful and this is now delayed until the restructure is implemented.
- 5.4. Both the Climate Change Officer and Climate Change Support officer suffered from lengthy absences from work which slowed some progress.
- 5.5. Data collection continues to be challenging and relies on the Climate Change Team to directly approach teams and then to manually enter the data. Due to the scale of the task it is only realistic to achieve this annually as part of the production of the annual carbon footprint. The Climate Change Team have requested that the new Inphase performance management system include climate related metrics. System roll out has been delayed but by ensuring that carbon metrics are in the second wave, this will support good reporting and accountability.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. Overall, the near 5% reduction in carbon emissions over the past year is very encouraging.
- 6.2. There have been a number of positive actions that the Council has delivered towards the strategy in the past year.
- 6.3. The Council needs maintain this progress with the implementation of the new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan in 2026.

Financial implications:

There are no new financial implications identified in the report.

Legal implications:

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to this report.