

## NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET

13 January 2026

Report Title: **Progress of the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy & Delivery Plan**

Submitted by: **Service Director – Sustainable Environment**

Portfolio/s: **Sustainable Environment**

Ward(s) affected: **All**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

To provide Cabinet with an annual review of the Delivery Plan forming part of the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy & Delivery Plan (SESDP).

#### **Recommendation**

**That:**

- 1. Cabinet notes the progress of the delivery plan associated with the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy, and refers the update to a future meeting of the Health Wellbeing and Environment Scrutiny Committee (HW&E).**

#### **Reasons**

Following the production and subsequent approval by Cabinet of the updated Sustainable Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan in June 2024 it was agreed that Cabinet receives an annual update which is then referred as an update to the HW&E scrutiny committee to note progress of the delivery plan to meet the aims of the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy and linked initiatives including the Council's Nature Recovery plans, Urban Tree Planting Strategy, UN Sustainable Development Goals and Climate Emergency Plans.

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1** The Council adopted its original Sustainable Environment Strategy in December 2020. The Strategy was a landmark document setting out the Council's commitment to the sustainable environmental future of the Borough and is an over-arching strategy, under which a range of other linked and related plans and initiatives sit.
- 1.2** The Strategy was refreshed in 2024 and approved by Cabinet in June 2024

**1.3** The SESDP is governed to be reviewed every 6 months to ensure it is a living document and always relevant with developed actions and progress updates.

## **2. Progress to Date**

### **2.1 Recycling & Waste**

- The Council is fully compliant with the government's proposal for simpler recycling and has started to collect flexibles and cartons 2 years ahead of the deadline.
- Increasing food waste service out to flats in advance of the mandatory April 2026 target alongside a communications campaign in partnership with SCC to reduce waste.
- Top quartile performer when compared to similar district councils in relation to overall recycling levels, kgs per household of residual waste, and missed collections
- New fleet of 17 Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCV's) fitted with electric bin lifts to reduce noise and save fuel (10% fuel saving predicted)

### **2.3 Natural Environment & Biodiversity**

- Adopted Phase 2 and 3 of the Grassland Management Strategy.
- Signed the Transforming Trent Valley Terms of Reference.
- Awarded, shortlisted and participated in APSE, and Britain in Bloom.
- Gained 7 Green Flag Awards
- Perennial planting began at Queens Gardens and various other green spaces.
- Facilitating a project with Keele University to study long grass at 11 bereavement sites, and 3 Grass Management sites.

### **2.4 Engagement & Behaviour Change**

- From April 2024 till March 2025 the team has engaged in over 80+ conferences, events, schools, site visits, and other engagements.
- Worked with over 10 schools to introduce Climate Action Plans with our free tools/templates.
- Grew our new social media over 500 likes/followers with thousands of engagements.
- Trained over 100 staff in Carbon Literacy.
- Embedded sustainability into every service through monthly action meetings.

### **Net Zero**

- Reviewed and updated The Sustainable Environment Strategy & Delivery Plan during both 6 monthly review periods.
- HVO is now being used for all Council owned and leased heavy vehicles as a transitional fuel with electric alternatives being trialed.
- Successful in £3.2M from Salix PSDS to decarbonize Jubilee 2 Leisure Centre.
- Commissioned UKPNS to develop a Depot Electrification Roadmap.
- Developed a Business Sustainability Guide and Sustainable Events Checklist.
- Modeling financial benefits of reducing energy consumption through increased use of renewable energy such as solar PV, and use of Electric Vehicles (EVs).

## 2.5 Other Achievements

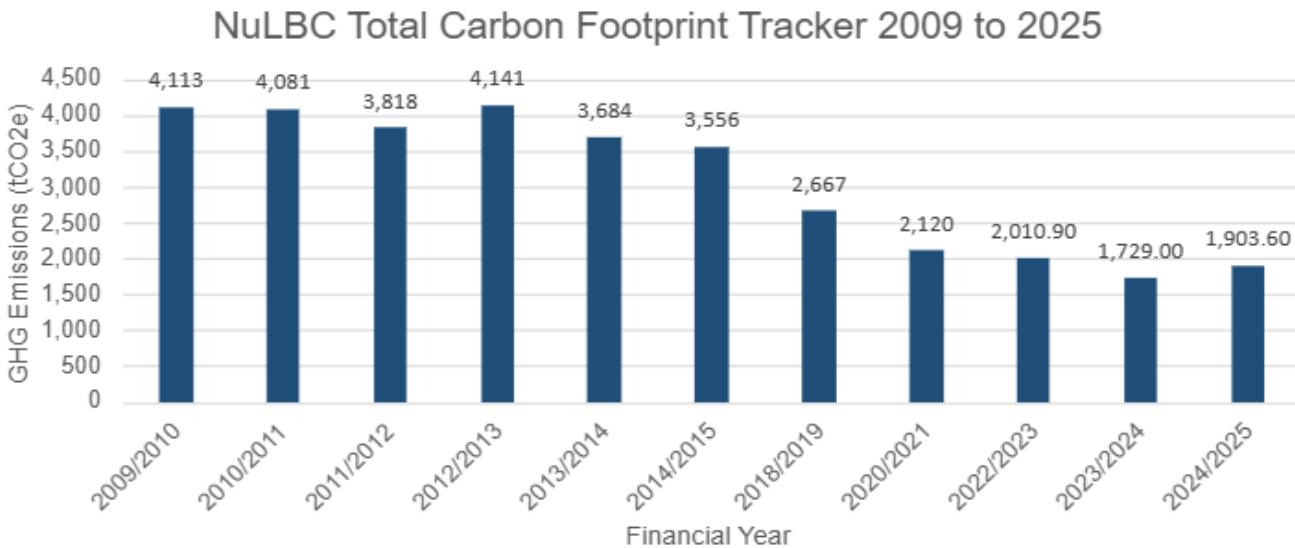
- Published a Business Sustainability Guide and Climate Action Plan Template with the Regulatory Services SEWG on the website available to all businesses with resources on actions to take, funding sources and key contacts.
- Created a Sustainability Impact Assessment Tool with the Strategy, People and Performance SEWG for all Committee Reports to analyse the sustainable impact of actions within reports.
- Published a Climate Action Planning Framework and Template, Sustainability Stakeholder List and list of collaboration opportunities that local education settings can use.
- Future Actions, to work and deliver a Sustainable Procurement Strategy, Adaptation Plan, People's Sustainability Assembly and many more!

## 2.6 SES Delivery Plan

- Each of the Council's Directorates has developed actions which contribute to the overall SES. The actions and current progress of all the Directorates is shown in the updated SES Delivery Plan, which is a live document as Appendix 1 attached to this report.

## 2.7 Council's Carbon Footprint

- The Council's carbon footprint for 2024/25 is 1,903.60 tonnes. There has been a slight increase in carbon emissions in the last year, which is attributed to increased gas consumption at J2, the depot and Castle House. However, the overall trajectory remains on a downward trend, as shown in the following graph.



## 3. Proposal

**3.1** To note the annual review of the Sustainable Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan, the main changes and additions are detailed below:

- The Strategy document has been updated with new carbon footprint data for 2024/2025
- Multiple actions now have in-depth monthly updates with many now progressing instead of not started, many actions now also implemented.
- Actions NS13 and NS14 were created to action the Biodiversity Report Duty and Lyme Countryside Park.
- ND1 was created to action a papeleras and digital Neighbourhood Delivery.
- SE11 changed to "engage staff in behaviour change campaigns."
- SES8 was created to action educating peat use.
- SEFS5 changed to action the development and delivery of Sustainable Fleet Replacement Charging Strategy.
- PS1 and PS2 were created to action business travel and paperless.

#### **4. Reasons for Proposed Solution**

**4.1** The Sustainable Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan sets out the Council's ambition to be an exemplar local authority in both caring for and enhancing our environment. Adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change means changing the way we do things for the long-term benefit of the Borough.

**4.2** To evolve the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan, as a 'living' document.

#### **5. Options Considered**

**5.1** There is no other option to meet the statutory challenges posed by the legislation.

#### **6. Legal and Statutory Implications**

**6.1** The Climate Change Act 2008 has the following provisions:

- Carbon targets and carbon budgeting - The Act places the government under a legal duty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.
- The Committee on Climate Change - The Act also establishes the Committee on Climate Change, an independent, expert body to advise government on the appropriate level for the targets, budgets, and on matters relating to mitigation and adaptation. The Committee will submit annual reports to parliament on progress towards the targets and the government must respond to this report.

**6.2** Council's Duty to reduce carbon emissions - There are currently no statutory requirements for local authorities to set or negotiate targets to reduce their own or area

wide emissions. However, the Borough declared a Climate Emergency in April 2019 and committed to reach net zero for its own operations by 2030.

- 6.3** All Local Authorities also have a “biodiversity duty” under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- 6.4** Net Zero is a Statutory requirement by 2050 for the United Kingdom.

## 7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1** There is no adverse equality impacts identified as a consequence of this report. Specific actions contained within the proposed reviewed SESDP will need to consider any equality impacts on a project-by-project basis.
- 7.2** However, a number of the UN Sustainable Development Goals which the Council is a signatory to relate to issues of social justice and fairness.

## 8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1** There are some financial and resource implications for much of the scope 1 action in decarbonising the fleet and buildings of the Council however much of this can be funded externally through national government grants.
- 8.2** As decarbonising continues through energy reduction and the move to renewables revenue savings will be realised. A good example is the move to EV power for several of the Council’s Streetscene pickups which were replaced in 2024. The 4 EV pickups have saved 4,778 litres of Diesel, equating to a £5,112.50 saving, and the vehicles are charged with the solar PV infrastructure at the depot.

## 9. Major Risks

- 9.1** No major risk as actions are being delivered and progressing well throughout all services in NuLBC.

## 10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

- 10.1** The Sustainable Environment Strategy and linked initiatives will support the realisation of the aims of all UN SDGs.



## 11. One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

**One Commercial Council**

*We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.*

**One Digital Council**

*We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.*

**One Sustainable Council**

*We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle.*

The Council has a well-developed Sustainability agenda, supported by the ongoing development of its Sustainable Environment Strategy and delivery plan.

## 11. Key Decision Information

**11.1** This report is an update on the progress of the SES and associated delivery plan; therefore, it is not a key decision.

## 12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

**12.1** There are several previous Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee reports, notably Cabinets approval of the decarbonising RoadMap in October 2023. The approval of the SESDP in June 2024 by Cabinet. The last 6 monthly review in early 2025.

## 13. List of Appendices

**13.1** Appendix 1 – SES – Delivery Plan 2025 V2

## 14. Background Papers

1. None