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| **Event Synopsis – A Greener Skipton and the Dales** |

This event, jointly hosted by Craven District Council and Skipton Business Improvement District, kicked off the Council’s annual review of the Climate Emergency Strategic Plan for the Craven District for 2021.

The event was attended by 87 people in total across the two sessions:

* 11 Craven District Councillors
* 7 Councillors from our Town and Parish Councils
* 3 of our major private sector employers
* 18 owners or employees of Small to Medium Sized Enterprises
* 14 representatives of local community groups
* 15 members or employees of local voluntary sector organisations
* 8 Craven District Council Officers
* 4 representatives from regional and national government agencies
* 5 university researchers
* 2 Councillors from neighbouring authorities

The event was started with opening remarks from **Councillor Carl Lis, Lead Member for Greener Craven**, who commented on the progress that the Council and its partners have already made and the distance that we still have to travel.

**Paul Shevlin, Chief Executive of Craven District Council** highlighted some of the Council’s recent achievements (including exceeding the tree planting target, completing the Leeds-Liverpool Canal towpath upgrade, installing Electric Vehicle charging points, and starting work on new, energy efficient, affordable housing), as well as thanking partners for their contributions in the District’s progress towards Carbon neutrality.

Our first session highlighted progress being made, and opportunities available to, **Sustainable Business and Enterprise** in Craven.

**Ben Wood, Sustainability Manager for Arla Foods** gave an overview of the work that Arla are doing to improve their environment impact, include large advances in reducing and improving the recyclability of packaging as well as innovative schemes such as ‘powered by poo’, which uses anaerobic digestion to produce biogas for the logistics fleet from cow manure.

**James Mason, Chief Executive** of **Welcome to Yorkshire** gave an overview of the organisation’s current campaigns and priorities, including the #walkshire campaign, with a focus on activities that encourage sustainable and regenerative tourism.

**Selby Stocks, Senior Architect** at **Rural Solutions** described approaches to thinking about sustainable buildings and estate, including the interactions between different buildings and the use of efficient, innovative and sustainable materials.

**Colin Curtis, Managing Director** of **Support the Goals** gave an overview of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and how they are being used to identify and act on shared priorities for development, for businesses and public organisations of all sizes.

**David Smurthwaite, Strategic Director** for **Craven District Council** described CDC’s approach planning the development of the area around the ‘Skipton Station Triangle’, ensuring the development of an area that has sustainable living designed in both for the near and longer term.

**Rob Atkins, Exchequer and Performance Manager** for **Craven District Council** explained CDC’s new procurement policies which are aimed at ensuring local, sustainable procurement.

Our second session focussed on the contribution that our **communities** are making to the Climate Emergency response.

**David Howlett, Global Resilience Partnership** set the scene, describing the global challenges that we are facing and highlighting the importance of the upcoming COP26 Climate Conference.

**Colin Speakman, Vice Chair, Dalesbus** introduced a paper that has been drafted by a group of local transport experts. ‘Towards an Integrated, Sustainable Public Transport Network in Craven’ describes a comprehensive approach that could be taken to ensuring that the District develops an integrated public transport that meets the travel needs of residents and visitors for work, study and social activities.

**Tess McMahon** from **Action on the Climate Emergency, Settle** described how the organisers of ACE Settle have developed, and continue to develop, a thriving network and programme of activities that supports and promotes community climate action in and around the Settle area.

**Andy Boyle,** the co-ordinator of **Otley Community Energy** and **Otley 2030** described how Otley is linking opportunities provided by local, regional and national initiatives together with private finance and community activity to form a comprehensive approach to the generation and use of energy (and more).

The talks were followed by a lively discussion about our current circumstances, the progress that we have already made, and the work that is still to be done.

All presentations are available on request. Note that some of the file sizes for the presentations are extremely large.

Rob Atkins, Exchequer and Performance Manager, Craven District Council

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| **Key Notes from the Discussions** |
| **Carbon Neutral Energy** |

Craven District Council’s estate and energy use

* If successful, the ‘Decarbonising Skipton’ bid for ERDF funding to install renewable energy generation across the Council’s estate should enable the Council to exceed its energy reduction targets for Council services to 2023. Achieving the further energy savings required to continue to meet energy reduction targets beyond 2024 will require further activity. Our current target is for a 50% reduction of energy use from current levels by 2025.
* The Council should carry out initial preparation for future renewables projects and efficiency improvements, in anticipation of further funding becoming available.
* Some of the activities listed in the ‘Carbon Neutral Energy’ section of the plan will have a negligible impact on CDC’s future energy use and should be removed or combined with other categories.

Community Energy Generation and Energy Efficiency

* A ‘Local Area Energy Plan’ approach could provide a good route to identifying opportunities for renewable energy generation development and efficiency improvements.
* A sub-group associated with ACE Settle are already looking at the possibility of a Local Area Energy Plan for the North of the District.
* Energy planning for the Skipton area could be linked to the ‘Skipton Station Triangle’ developments as this substantial redevelopment provides a unique opportunity to review the use of land and resources in this area.
* There are opportunities to access private finance, and hybrid community/private financing models for local renewable energy generation, which should be explored. There are also number of regional and local Solar initiatives which could provide an opportunity for funding and development – the main local barrier being the availability of reasonably priced land suitable for such a development.

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| **Carbon Neutral Development** |

A focus on liveable town and village centres

* It was generally acknowledged that the configuration of town and larger village centres is likely to change in the medium and longer term, not just as a result of the pandemic but also as a result of economic conditions. A move away from physical and traditional high street retail is increasing the challenge of operating business in town and village centres. This could present an opportunity for more sustainable living as more town and village centre space could be converted back to efficient and convenient residential use, supporting continuing sustainable and vibrant communities.
* The ‘Skipton Station Triangle’ area masterplan provides a specific opportunity to develop a sustainable community area, with efficient buildings, transport links, community facilities and local-scale renewable energy production potentially built into the design.
* The Council and its partners should seek further opportunities to identify, support and encourage the transition for town and village centres to sustainable community hubs.
* Survey results so far suggest that the temporary pedestrianisation of Skipton High Street on market days has, on balance, been well received by the public and by local traders.

Improving energy use in affordable housing developed by CDC

* The Council should consider targets for embodied carbon within its own developments. There would be an additional cost to improving the use of embodied carbon in housing developments. Councillors would need to be provided with clear information about the additional costs and benefits as the costs would be unlikely to be fully recouped through the sale of the property.
* The Council are currently applying BREEAM ‘Very Good’ standard to our new developments. There are two higher ratings than ‘Very Good’ available on the BREEAM framework and the Council should consider whether they could use them.
* There was a general agreement that the Council should be leading by example regarding construction standards.

Improving energy use as part of the planning system

* The Council’s ability to influence the energy efficiency of new large-scale housing developments is limited by national regulations. We should expect to see some improvements under current regulations. A reasonable, achievable target would be around 20%. This is because the current national strategy regarding domestic energy use is more focused on the decarbonisation of the national grid than it is on enforcing a ‘fabric first’ approach to buildings efficiency. The Council should continually review the emerging national policy landscape to ensure that all opportunities for further improvements are capitalised on.
* CDC are already asking for timber-framed construction on larger sites, to ensure the maximum embodiment of carbon.
* Urban footprint: there is a tension between social expectations in our District, and ideal land use footprints for higher efficiency. Comfortable housing standards are generally perceived, locally, as having a low-density footprint whereas more efficient housing tends to be higher density. Does the Council have a clear position on this?
* There are opportunities in the current Local Plan to promote improvements that don’t require a wait until 2025. The Council should be explicit about the linkages between Climate Emergency Strategic Plan priorities and the policy statements in the Local Plan. The Good Design SPD (currently in development) will provide further opportunities to explicitly define expectations regarding efficiency, energy generation and carbon embodiment.
* There is already a strategic focus on efficiency in the Local Plan (e.g. ensuring proximity to services).

Preparation and support for retrofit

* Readiness for energy efficiency retrofit across the District is low, and particularly for those owning and living in older-style properties. The Council should consider what options are available for promoting retrofit and accessing funding to support it.
* Can the Council better promote the Green Homes Grant?
* Could the Council and its partners identify and enable whole street or community retrofits? Is it possible to learn from examples where this has been successful elsewhere?

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| **Travel and Transportation** |

Public Transport

* There is a clear need and demand for an improvement in Public Transport across the District to enable sustainable lifestyles that are not depended on personal vehicle use for all day-to-day activities.
* The system is fortunate to have a good rail network across the District which could, with a few small additions and changes to the timetable, form the hub of a local system that can be relied upon for most day-to-day purposes (work, education, social activities).
* Communities not on the rail network rely on the diminishing bus network, which requires greater reconfiguration to be reliable enough to displace motor vehicle journeys.
* There may be considerable potential for share taxi schemes within the District.
* It was noted that the District Council does not have statutory powers in this area. The document prepared by the group of transport specialists and experts in advance of this meeting could form the basis of a good, comprehensive strategy and plan.
* This does require some further consultation with, for example, Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership, and the Settle-Carlisle Development Company.
* The role (and potential role) of Community Transport operators should also be further considered. Providers of Community Transport often have significant capacity that is not always used as well as it could be.
* Welcome to Yorkshire’s #walkshire campaign will include walking routes with clear links to public transport, and is a clear opportunity to promote access to the Dales and to activities in the surrounding area without the use of private vehicles.

Active Travel

* The Skipton Area Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan commissioned by NYCC is being developed, and should provide detailed plans for larger-scale infrastructure improvements in the Skipton area.
* Smaller improvements (e,g, cycle parking) and improvements outside of the Skipton area are not well covered, and the Craven Climate Action Partnership have set up a sub-group to investigate and act on this.
* There is also a need to raise general awareness of safer cycling, and continue to offer cycle training and information.
* The Covid-19 pandemic will have resulted in a large cohort of children who have not accessed ‘bikeability’ training, and we need to make sure that arrangements are in place for them to catch up.

Electric Vehicles

* It was noted that there is likely to be a continuing need for some residents to regularly use private cars even in the long-term, particularly in very rural locations and for residents with mobility issues. Although there are environmental challenges in their production, Electric Vehicles do usually represent a considerable energy cost saving over their lifetime when compared with a fossil fuel vehicle.
* The YDNPA are rolling out EV charging points across most car parks within the National Park area in the District.
* CDC are currently discussing the possibility of further points in CDC car parks with our contracted supplier, Osprey.
* A range of financial incentives are still available to install EV charge points at homes and outside workplaces.

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| **Zero Carbon Waste** |

Fuel use by the Waste Management fleet

* New route planning software has been purchased and as the lane end collection reconfiguration ends the Council will use this software to calculate more efficient routes. The Waste Management Team believe that a substantial fuel saving is available just through optimisation.
* One small compaction Refuse Collection Vehicle is being purchased this year, for use in the North of the District. If this proves to be successful then a further 2 vehicles will be purchased in 2022/23. We believe that this will result in a further, substantial fuel saving.
* Engine Shed Lane redevelopment is this year. The redeveloped depot will include facilities for charging and for servicing electric vehicles. The depot itself includes a solar PV roof and high standard of materials efficiency.

Waste Education, Behaviour and Public Realm

* The Council is already committed to providing a programme of ‘Waste Education’.
* Any activity by the Council and its partners should reference both the waste hierarchy and the Environment Bill.
* The plan should include clear statistics for the volume of waste produced and managed.
* This is the only area of the plan where progress has reversed during the pandemic. Residual waste volumes have increased and recycling contamination rates have gone up. Some communities have also experienced negative consequences from increased fly-tipping and inappropriate refuse disposal.
* There is, specifically, a large amount of waste associated with the clothes industry. The partnership could consider a plan to ensure that clothing is reused, recycled and new clothing is sustainable, across the District.

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| **Land and Nature** |

Tree Planting

* CDC has exceeded its tree planting target for the first year of the plan, but doesn’t own much more land suitable for tree planting. The only sizeable plot of land is at Low Demesne, Ingleton, which is yet to be assessed for suitability.
* Partners with large tree planting programmes include the Broughton Hall Estate, YDNPA and the Environment Agency, with a combined tree planting target of circa 100 times that of the Council’s direct tree planting target.
* There is substantial pressure to avoid adding plastic tree guards to the environment, and the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust have been awarded funding for a programme to trial plastic-free tree planting at scale in the Dales area.

Green Infrastructure

* Many ‘Green Resources’ have multiple functions, and management across the District might be best coordinated via a Green Infrastructure Strategy.
* Green Infrastructure programmes are already co-ordinated across the District (particularly by YDNPA and by the EA); this work has the potential to form the basis of a Green Infrastructure Strategy.
* There is currently little District-level collaboration on local food growing (i.e. community food growing schemes). Could this be something to investigate?
* There may be the opportunity to source ‘green’ local materials for construction and for industry (e.g. timber, hemp).

Biodiversity

* The CDC Planning Policy team are working on a Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document, which should better articulate the Council’s expectations around biodiversity in planning.
* The Council has funded and promoted biodiversity on sites that it owns, including in the management of the Crematorium site and on Gawflatt Meadow.
* There is increasing interest in ‘rewilding’-type activity, both for biodiversity and for potential economic benefits under the new regulatory and subsidy framework for land use. The recently established Yorkshire Rewilding Network may provide valuable connections and advice to advance this.

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| **Use of Materials** |

* The wording of the existing sections should be sharpened to ensure a focus on eliminating the use of Single Use Plastics.
* Work with partners could be broadened to include the reduction of material use, perhaps capitalising on work that retailers in the District are already doing in this area.

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| **Our Council** |

Communication and Engagement

* The plan still needs a communication and engagement strategy associated with it. This should include the use of social media. It should also include specific activity to engage with Children and Young People, and particularly in the co-design and planning of local action.
* We need to ensure that the Plan actions are threaded through all of the Council’s work (i.e. ensure that the new policies to include the Climate Emergency in committee reports, in performance reporting and in procurement exercises are being acted upon by Councillors and Officers).
* It would be useful to have a website for the Craven Climate Action Partnership, to share information and publicise events, opportunities and progress.

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

* The UN SDGs provide a clear framework for global action against a range of development headings. The Climate Emergency Strategic Plan aligns well with the Sustainable Development Goals. A range of key partners are signed up to explicitly work towards SDGs, including some of our major employers (including Skipton Building Society and Arla), and Skipton Town Council.
* A community-led session could be held, to identify alignments between the Plan and the SDGs.

Measurement

* The Council needs to ensure that it includes a clear range of measures and targets in this iteration of the plan.

Co-ordination

* The Council (and indeed the wider partnership) need to give careful consideration to the most appropriate scale and scope for co-ordinating activity. Which activities are best co-ordinated by the Council, and which are more appropriate to be led by a wider partnership? Is Craven District the right geography for all of the partnership activity, or is it smaller or larger than that (e.g. splitting activity between North Craven and the Skipton Area, or broadening it to include the Dales beyond Craven). How can we ensure that momentum and local co-ordination continues beyond the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation?