

23 November 2021

REPORT TO: Climate and Environment Advisory Committee

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Bridget Smith

LEAD OFFICER: Head of Shared Waste Services and Environment

Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) programme update

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with information on the progress of the Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) programme and Six Free Trees project for review and comment.

Key Decision

2. This is not a key decision. The report is provided to the Committee to support their role promoting and facilitating the Zero Carbon Communities network, sharing information, guidance and best practice for parish councils and local community groups wanting to help shift towards a zero-carbon lifestyle.

Recommendations

3. The committee is invited to review the update and highlight any issues of concern and actions recommended to address these.

Details

Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme

4. Proposals for a ZCC grant were recommended by the Climate & Environment Advisory Committee (4 Feb 2019) and the Grants Advisory Committee (29 Mar 2019) and approved by Cabinet on 01 May 2019. The funds are taken from the Renewables Reserve (business rates retained from commercial renewable energy projects in the district).

5. The ZCC grant supports parish councils and community groups to run projects which engage communities and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Applications are invited for a £1,000 - £15,000 share of the £100,000 total annual grant fund.
6. The grant is a key mechanism by which the Council can pursue their Green to our Core agenda and deliver the community-focussed actions in the Zero Carbon Action Plan. The prime objective is the successful completion of at least 7 projects which deliver community engagement on climate change mitigation and reduced CO2 emissions.

Round 1

7. In its first year, the ZCC grant welcomed projects which engaged communities and contributed to the aim of becoming zero carbon by 2050. 42 applications were received, 19 of which were awarded funding totalling £120,959.
8. 11 projects from Round 1 are completed, and 'End of Project' reports continue to be received.
9. Given the impact of COVID-19, 4 projects have been granted extensions or adapted due to social distancing rules. All projects have started - **Appendix A** provides an overview of the progress of each project, with a RAG (red, amber, green) status given to their progress.
10. Project successes have been shared through social media, the website, the South Cambs quarterly magazine and our ZCC quarterly newsletter. Externally, the grant has attracted media attention including BBC Radio Cambridgeshire and the Cambridge Independent newspaper. Publicity material has been provided (by working alongside the Communications department) to allow applicants to promote the Council's work.
11. The ZCC programme featured as a case study in a national Local Government Association webinar on engaging communities on climate change, held on 26th February 2021.

Round 2

12. Round 2 of the ZCC grant, launched in 2020, received applications for the themes of cycling, community building and tree planting. 45 eligible projects applied in total.
13. In November 2020, 17 successful projects were selected and awarded between £1,000 to £15,000. A total of £94,660 was allocated to successful projects.
14. An overview of the projects funded through Round 2 can be seen in **Appendix B**.
15. All Round 2 projects are due to be completed by the end of December 2021. Where projects have been completed and project reports already received, this is noted.

Round 3

16. Round 3 launched in May 2021. Projects could apply to two main themes: community buildings and nature, which each comprised 40% of the total grant fund, or to a general

theme for exceptional projects which comprised 20% of the total grant fund. 27 eligible applications were received.

17. 15 applicants were successful, and total of £98,796 was funded to projects. A summary of the funding distribution by theme can be seen below.

Community Building	5	£52,495
Nature	7	£24,900
Other	3	£21,401

18. A grant of £15,000 was rejected by the Tithe Barn Trust after receiving funding from another source. A grant of £4,000 was withdrawn from Foxton Village Hall as the proposed improvements had already been installed.

19. A summary of the projects funded in Round 3 can be seen in **Appendix C**.

20. As a result of unusual circumstances in Round 3 of the ZCC Grant scheme, £25,544 remains unallocated. Options for the unallocated grant will be presented to the Grants Advisory Committee on 26 November for recommendation to the lead Cabinet Member for Finance. CEAC will be invited to attend this meeting.

Energy Surveys

21. Round 2 of the ZCC grant scheme included energy surveys, funded separately from the main grant. Following a procurement exercise, PECT (Peterborough Environment City Trust) were appointed to deliver these. The total number of surveys to be delivered through this scheme is 25. 10 surveys were completed during Round 2 and an additional 15 surveys of community buildings around South Cambridgeshire are due to be completed.

22. Each survey costs £790 + VAT making the total expenditure for the Free Energy Survey Scheme since its launch £19,750 + VAT.

6 Free Trees Scheme

Project Overview

23. The scheme began in 2019/2020 to help deliver the council's Doubling Nature Strategy by providing three free trees to every parish in the district with the aims to:

- sequester carbon;
- help biodiversity; and
- increase health and wellbeing of residents.

3 Free Trees Scheme

24. Through the 3 Free Trees scheme, parish councils could apply for a £60 voucher for three free trees from one of 7 participating garden centres to purchase trees and the

supporting equipment required. 54 parish councils accepted the offer, and 162 trees were planted.

6 Free Trees Scheme

25. This year, the 6 Free Trees scheme has been launched which offers 6 free trees to each parish council in South Cambridgeshire. Parish councils could apply online to receive a purchase order form to complete and send to our participating nursery. Instead of 6 free trees, parish councils could opt for 1 larger tree rather than 6 smaller ones. The scheme has received 72 applications from parish councils so far. Applications closed on the 27th October. Purchase orders for 208 trees of varying sizes have been received so far.

ZCC Workshops, Newsletters and Climate and Environment fortnight of events.

Project Overview

26. The ZCC Workshops, Newsletters and Climate and Environment Fortnight of Events aim to:

- enhance community engagement;
- raise awareness around the ZCC programme, green businesses, sustainable initiatives; and
- promote the council's Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature strategies.

ZCC Workshops

27. A series of monthly events has been launched entitled "ZCC Green Connect". Each session includes a talk by a guest speaker, a short Q+A and a series of breakout sessions whereby people are split into smaller groups and encouraged to introduce themselves and discuss selected questions. The first of these took place on 9th November 2021 on the topic of "COP26 – What it means for South Cambridgeshire?".

ZCC Newsletter

28. The ZCC newsletter is a quarterly e-bulletin. The next newsletter will be published on 1st December 2021.

Climate and Environment Fortnight of Events

29. A successful climate and environment fortnight of events was conducted in February 2021. There are plans in place to hold another fortnight of events in February 2022.

Implications

30. In the writing of this report, the following financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and other issues were considered. These are as follows:

Financial

31. The awarded funding falls within the Council's proposed budget for 2021-22.

Legal

32. Funding agreements with grant recipients will be drawn up in accordance with templates approved by the legal team. Funding agreements will allow variation or recovering of the grant in specific circumstances.

Effect on Council Priority Areas

33. The Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme has attracted significant interest. All the aims below from the SCDC Business plan 2019-24, will be furthered by one or more of the projects recommended for funding.

Growing local businesses and economies

34. Investing in renewable technologies.
35. Allowing local businesses to expand sustainably.

Being green to our core

36. Supporting community groups to promote behavioural change and reduce their reliance on fossil fuels.
37. Helping communities to secure grants to fund green projects.
38. Protecting and enhancing the district's heritage and environment.

A modern and caring Council

39. Funding community and voluntary groups that benefit local people.
40. Promoting innovation by funding new green technologies.

Background Papers

Climate and Environment Advisory Committee Meeting Monday, 4 February 2019

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=1095&MIId=7489>

Grants Advisory Committee Meeting Friday, 29 March 2019

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=1096&MIId=7487&Ver=4>

Cabinet, on 01 May 2019

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=293&MIId=7365&Ver=4>

Grants Advisory Committee Meeting Friday, 27 November 2020
<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1096&MId=7968&Ver=4>

Grants Advisory Committee Meeting, Friday 26 February 2021
[Agenda for Grants Advisory Committee on Friday, 26 February 2021, 10.00 a.m. \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Climate and Advisory Committee Meeting, Tuesday 9 March 2021
[Agenda for Climate and Environment Advisory Committee on Tuesday, 9 March 2021, 2.00 p.m. \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Grants Advisory Committee, Friday 24th September 2021
[Agenda for Grants Advisory Committee on Friday, 24 September 2021, 1.30 p.m. \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Appendices

Appendix A – Overview of Round 1 project progress.

Appendix B – Overview of Round 2 funded projects.

Appendix C – Overview of Round 3 funded projects.

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