

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY COUNCIL MANAGER

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRASPOT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	24 NOVEMBER 2015	AGENDA ITEM:	13
TITLE:	READING'S CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2013-2020; PERFORMANCE REPORT TO MARCH 15		
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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Reading's Climate Change Strategy 2013-2020 (Reading Means Business on Climate Change) was launched in Sept 2013, setting out a vision for Reading for 2020, a set of strategic priorities organised according to eight themes, and detailed action plans on how the strategic priorities will be delivered by partners.
- 1.2 This report presents the progress against the targets in the theme action plans for the period April 2014 to March 2015 and the first annual review of the action plan.
- 1.3 The climate change strategy seeks to develop activities that will lead to reductions in the carbon footprint of Reading Borough of 34% from 2005 levels by 2020.
- 1.4 The latest local area carbon footprint data (2013) showed Reading Borough had reduced its carbon emissions by 27% reduction per capita since 2005. It is the best performing Local Authority in Berkshire and amongst the best per carbon emission reductions of the 413 Local Authorities in the UK.
- 1.5 There have been a number of key successes in the delivery of the Climate Change action plan during the first 18 months of delivery of the strategy, including a large solar panel project on Reading's

Council housing and securing of funding for LED streetlights across the borough. There has been significant progress with sustainable transport schemes such as ReadyBike and the new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the river Thames. Other successes include the completion of the Re-Start Local business project and local community projects such as Reading Bike Kitchen.

- 1.6 Across all partners, 80.2% of actions were green and amber (on-track, complete or progressing but with minor delays/issues), with the remaining being 'red' or purple (not progressing or yet to be resourced or developed). For the delivery of actions for which Reading Borough Council is the lead, 82.5% of actions were green or amber. The full performance report against all of the actions and targets is set out at Appendix A.
- 1.7 Overall there has been significant progress, but there are some areas where timescales have slipped, local delivery partners have not been able to commit, largely due to resource constraints, or national policy changes have impacted delivery.
- 1.8 The first annual review of the action plans has been carried out, identifying changes to some of the actions, timescales and targets. These have arisen through discussions with partners on the development of the action plans over time. The revised action plans for 2015/16 are also presented at Appendix A.

2.0 RECOMMENDED ACTION

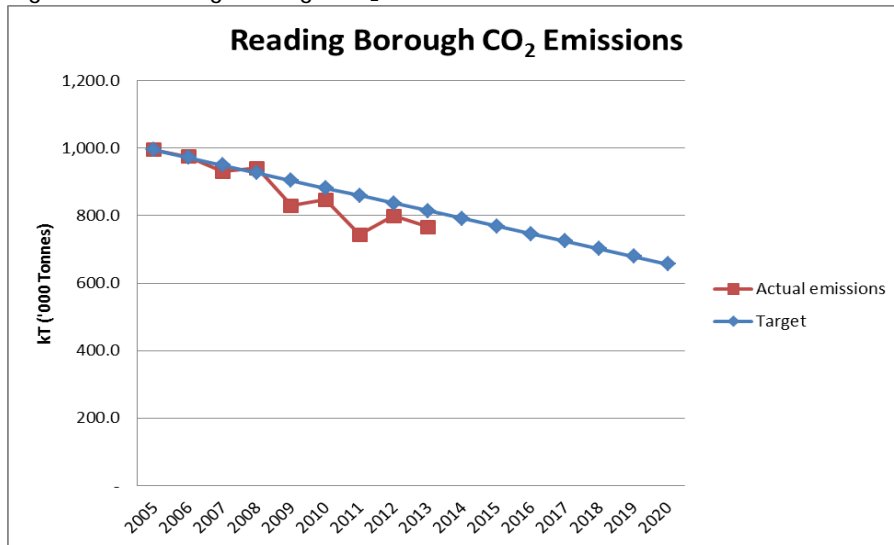
- 2.1 To note the progress that has been made in the delivery of the Reading Climate Change Strategy 'Reading Means Business on Climate Change', for the period April 2014 - March 2015.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Climate Change Strategy for Reading 2013-2020 (Reading Means Business on Climate Change), was developed through extensive stakeholder consultation and launched in Sept 2013.
- 3.2 The strategy sets out a vision for Reading for 2020, with low carbon being the normal way to live and work in 2050. It proposes a target for the Borough as a whole to reduce emissions by 34% by 2020 (against a 2005 baseline).
- 3.3 The total emissions from the whole borough of Reading in 2013 (the most recent data) were 23% less than 2005 and 29% less per head of population. This is the largest reduction of any borough in Berkshire and the 4th best per capita reduction in the Southeast (of 74 authorities). Reading had the 12th best per capita reduction in

emissions of the 413 Local Authorities in the UK. Despite emissions rising in 2012, they reduced again in 2013 and remain below the target level.

Figure 1 - Reading Borough CO₂ Emissions



3.4 The strategy also presents a set of strategic priorities which form the framework for the actions within each of eight themes. These key objectives will be reviewed after three years in 2016/17.

3.5 The eight themes of the strategy are:

- Energy Supply
- Low Carbon Development
- Natural Environment
- Water Supply and Flooding
- Transport
- Purchasing, Supply and Consumption
- Education, Communication and Influencing Behaviour
- Community

3.6 'Theme leads' from a range of partner agencies (including the Council) volunteered to co-ordinate and develop each theme chapter, in consultation with stakeholders.

3.7 Detailed action plans, setting out how the strategic priorities will be delivered by partners, were published in November 2013. These include specific targets, measures and milestones for each action. The action plans are reviewed annually (see section 5).

3.8 Performance for the first six months of the action plans was reported to SEPT Committee in July 2014. This report covers the performance for the period April 14 - March 15.

3.9 Although the action plans detail delivery by a range of organisations, a significant number of actions are being delivered by the Council. The Council's delivery within the strategy is generally embodied in existing Council policies such as the Carbon Plan, Local Transport Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan.

3.10 As part of the strategy, Reading Climate Action Network (RCAN), a wider network of organisations, businesses, communities and individuals, was also launched in September 2013. Members of RCAN seek to establish ways to meet the targets and aspirations of the strategy, committing to one of a number of possible challenges, including reducing their emissions by 7% a year. Two meetings are held per year, with the last one on 2nd June 2015, focusing on energy, attended by over forty people.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST ACTION PLANS APRIL 2014 - MARCH 2015

4.1 A RAG (red/amber/green/purple) status¹ has been allocated to the actions in each theme action plan. The table below summarises the proportion of each type of action.

Table 1: RAG status of all actions

	<i>purple</i>	<i>red</i>	<i>amber</i>	<i>green</i>
Energy Supply	1	1	6	12
Low carbon development	2	5	8	7
Natural environment	0	2	6	9
Water supply and flooding	3	0	2	11
Transport	1	0	5	18
Purchasing, supply and consumption	3	1	7	11
Education, Communication and Influencing Behaviour	2	6	3	6
Community	3	0	5	6
Total (152)	15	15	42	80
%age	9.9%	9.9%	27.6%	52.6%

¹ Red = significant issues with either delivery or resourcing

Amber = work progressing or due to progress but delayed/ not to original timescale; issues but not significant

Green = complete or no issues and on time

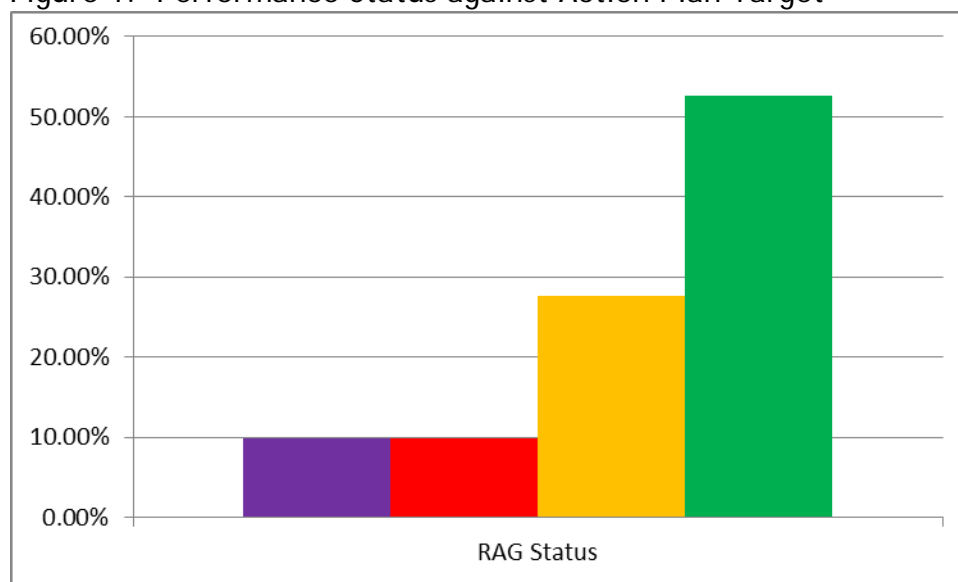
Purple - actions which are a good idea, but which are not yet developed or resourced

4.2 The table below summarises the proportion of 'red', 'amber', 'green' and 'purple' for actions for which Reading Borough Council is the lead deliverer.

Table 2: RAG status of RBC actions

	<i>purple</i>	<i>red</i>	<i>amber</i>	<i>green</i>
Energy Supply	0	0	4	10
Low carbon development	2	5	9	6
Natural environment	0	0	3	6
Water supply and flooding	0	0	1	6
Transport	1	0	5	15
Purchasing, supply and consumption	1	1	5	5
Education, Communication and Influencing Behaviour	2	4	1	1
Community	1	0	3	1
Total (97)	7	10	31	49
%age	7.2%	10.3%	32%	50.5%

Figure 1: Performance Status against Action Plan Target



4.3 The natural environment theme has been monitored less rigorously over the last year due to lack of resource, however the majority of actions are believed to be largely on track.

Successes

- 4.4 A significant proportion of actions (53%) are 'green'. The following projects are particular successes to date:
- 4.5 The annual emissions for Reading Borough Councils corporate estate remained within target for 2014/15. In December 2014, Reading's new **Civic Offices** were commissioned and staff moved in. The new offices were refurbished with energy efficient technologies such as LED lighting and new ventilation systems. All available roof space was fitted with solar panels, which are predicted to supply 10% of the total electricity of the building. The building was predicted to use 75% less energy than the previous Civic Offices.
- 4.6 In January 2015, installation of **solar panels** on Reading's Council houses began. The project aims to install systems on 490 houses, providing free renewable energy to tenants and saving over 600 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per annum. The project will triple the amount of renewable energy generating equipment that the Council owns. At the time of reporting, over 450 houses have had panels installed.
- 4.7 Over the 2014/15 winter 186 vulnerable people were helped to heat their homes by the Council's **Winter Watch project**. 64% of these people had long term health conditions. Help was given with the cost of their energy bills and/or by providing free boilers and insulation.
- 4.8 Following previous work to replace around 10% of the Borough's lighting with LED lamps, in 2015 the Council was awarded funding by the government to install **LED street-lighting** across the whole borough. The project would reduce emissions by over 2000 tonnes per annum.
- 4.9 The **new pedestrian and cycle bridge** over the river Thames, connecting Caversham to the railway station was opened on the 30th September 2015.
- 4.10 **ReadyBike** was launched in 2014 and there are now 200 bicycles available to hire from at 29 locations around Reading. Demand has been strong in the first year of operation. Key statistics for the first year are:
- Over 26,000 rentals
 - Over 7,000 casual users
 - Over 220 annual members regularly using the 200 ReadyBikes
 - Average rental of over 38 minutes
 - Estimated distance of over 135,000 miles cycled between the 29 docking stations.

- 4.11 **Reading Bike Kitchen** was established, which seeks to bring old bikes back into use; volunteers help fix bikes by providing all the equipment, but passing on the skills for people to do it themselves.
- 4.12 **Food4Families** continues to expand. The project has established a number of gardens which are now independently run by the organisations that hold the land and have expanded their activities to include the 'Reading Food Growing Network'
- 4.13 **SuDs (Sustainable Urban Drainage)** are now a material consideration in all planning applications; RBC have been building in capacity for severe weather events into the drainage system in certain areas of Reading.
- 4.14 **Joint working** has been taking place between the Environment Agency, Reading Borough Council and Thames Water, including joint emergency planning at the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum.
- 4.15 A total of 71 trees were planted across the borough in winter/spring 2015.
- 4.16 Over 100 SME companies (Small and Medium Sized Enterprises) took part in the **Re-Start Local Project**, working to develop the green economy in Reading and eastern Berkshire.
- 4.17 The **RCAN website** (Reading Climate Action Network - ReadingClimateAction.org.uk) is set up and provides resources and information for members and the public.

Delivery Constraints

- 4.18 A minority of actions have been designated 'red' (significant issues with delivery) or 'purple' (actions which are a good idea, but which are not yet developed or resourced) (11% red and 5.8% purple).
- 4.19 These actions have been considered by the Reading Climate Change Partnership Board and a number have now been amended or redefined as part of the annual review process, so that they are more realistic and achievable, given current resources. Some have been deleted where there is no evidence of available resource.
- 4.20 'Red' and 'purple' actions are listed in Appendix C, along with plans for moving forward on the issues or for deletion as part of the review.
- 4.21 In summary, key considerations include:
- several 'purple' actions (and some 'red') have been deleted due to resource constraints across partners

- failure of the Green Deal has affected activities in the Low Carbon Development theme
- there is a need to review and redefine waste related actions in the Purchasing, Consumption and Supply chapter, in light of new Waste Strategy
- actions in the Education, Communications and Behaviour Change theme relating to both landlords and the economy have now been redefined and agreed
- further discussions with partners e.g. Thames water and University of Reading are required for a number of actions

5.0 REVIEW OF ACTION PLANS

- 5.1 When the strategy was being developed it was agreed that the actions would need to be reviewed, including their timescales and targets.
- 5.2 It was agreed that the theme action plans will be reviewed annually by the RCCP Board, with the first review taking place between October 14 and March 15.
- 5.3 As part of this first review, stakeholder comments on the actions plans were requested via RGBN (Reading Green Business Network) and RCAN (Reading Climate Action Network) websites, and via the RCAN newsletter, last autumn. A total of four responses were received from two individuals.
- 5.4 Other review changes have been proposed by theme leads as a result of discussions with deliverers. The review has identified where actions need redefining or removing, and consequently a number of 'purple' and 'red' actions have been amended or deleted, largely due to resource constraints. A number of timescales, for actions which have not been amended, will need to be reviewed over the coming months
- 5.5 The review also identified where new actions could usefully be added as new projects and opportunities emerge. A total of 8 new actions have been added to the Energy Supply, Low Carbon Development, Education, Communication and Behaviour Change, and Community theme action plans.
- 5.6 No revisions were proposed for the Water Supply & Flooding and Natural Environment action plans as part of the review.
- 5.7 The changes have been agreed by the RCCP Board and the amended action plans will be published on RGBN and RCAN. These will be used

for monitoring progress in 2015/16. The updated action plans are presented in Appendix A.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- To Develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley

6.1 The Council has made a commitment to lead in tackling climate change in Reading. The success of the delivery of the Climate Change Strategy is paramount in meeting this strategic aim.

- To establish Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit.

6.2 Reading needs to develop a low carbon economy. Jobs and learning opportunities created in the delivery of the strategy are a key part of this.

- To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all

6.3 The health and welfare of the population of Reading depends in part on understanding and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Sustainable development and transport also lead to positive health outcomes.

7.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 Extensive stakeholder engagement, including two very well attended workshops, influenced the development of 'Reading Means Business on Climate Change' from the outset. Three six monthly meetings of 'RCAN' have also taken place since its launch.

7.2 A draft of the strategy was published for public consultation on 1st November 2012, running for six weeks until December 14th and was extended to February 2013.

7.3 The action plans were open for public comment via RGBN and RCAN websites (www.RGBN.org.uk and www.readingclimateaction.org.uk) in Autumn 2014. Responses have been considered as part of the annual review of the action plans.

8.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 The implementation of Reading Means Business on Climate Change and associated carbon reductions benefits Reading's population as a whole by helping to mitigate the effects of climate change, as well as benefiting some sections of the population more specifically e.g. the

education and skill level of those living and working in Reading will need to be raised in order to meet the demands of an expanding 'green economy'; this will enable people generally to play a fuller part in a more cohesive society.

- 8.2 Support is given to those who are struggling to afford their fuel bills through the Winter Watch project. Grant assistance is provided through the Green Deal's ECO funding, to enable those in fuel poverty who find it difficult to heat their homes to be able to afford work such as insulation so that their homes produce fewer emissions as well as being warmer.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Climate Change Strategy is a key policy under the Local Strategic Partnership, its delivery forming part of the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 9.2 Nationally, legal obligations in respect of climate change are incorporated into legislation through a range of regulations set out under the Climate Change Act 2008. The Reading Climate Change Strategy does not set out any specific binding actions in relation to these regulations but offers a multi-organisation framework which constitutes the proposals for the Borough to assist in meeting the national carbon budgets.
- 9.3 The low carbon development chapter sets out the intended course of action for planning policy development and upcoming obligations relating to the Zero Carbon Standards, which are yet to be set in statute and which relate to the Building Control Regulations and National Planning Policy Framework. The strategy sets out a principle in this regard to incorporate a Zero Carbon approach in respect of new development.
- 9.4 The Energy Efficiency Directive 2012 came into force in December 2012 and member states have to implement it by June 2014. The Directive requires member states to renovate 3% of buildings "owned and occupied" by Central Government. It also says Member States shall encourage local and regional government to adopt plans, energy management systems and energy performance contracts. The publication of the UK National Energy Efficiency Action Plan in April 2014 outlines the range of public sector policies that apply to Local Authorities, although there are no specific binding targets.
- 9.5 Whilst a number of initiatives and investment proposals will be incorporated in the Climate Change Strategy Action plan, the obligations relating to the Energy Performance in Buildings Regulations, Carbon Reduction Commitment, Energy Efficiency Regulations and Energy Act are specifically addressed in the Carbon Plan 2015. This sets out the specific actions that the Council is

intending to make in relation to its use of energy and fuel in its own estate operations.

- 9.6 The Home Energy Conservation Act and Energy Act set out the obligations on the Council to make provisions and plans to improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock within its area of control. This includes stating the intended course of action in relation to the Green Deal (The Government's policy on retrofitting of buildings for energy efficiency). The Council published its updated HECA report in March 2015.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The action plan sets out the actions that the Council and/or other partners will make to meet the strategy. Actions for which the council are the named lead delivery body were identified as deliverable within the existing budget framework of the Council at the time of producing the strategy. In many cases actions depend on national policies that have yet to be passed into legislation or that have been withdrawn or are proposed to be.
- 10.2 The responsibility for climate change policy is held by the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee. The action plans will be reviewed annually, and the committee will approve any changes to ensure that delivery is consistent with the Council's policy and budget frameworks. Should amendments to the action plans require additional resourcing, beyond the existing budget framework then the revisions will need to be approved by full Council.
- 10.3 The financial implications of the delivery of the Council's actions in relation to energy management form a key element of the financial savings programme of the Council. Annual energy bills amount to around £4m including schools. This annual revenue expenditure is predicted to rise beyond inflation and therefore it is important to maintain investment and operational control on energy and fuel to enable significant reductions in energy consumption.
- 10.4 The delivery of the Council's actions in relation to energy management forms a key element of the financial savings programme of the Council. The strategy includes investment plans for the period 2013-16. These are set out in the Council's Carbon Plan.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 The full theme performance reports are presented at Appendix A