

Item: 19

General Meeting of the Council: 8 October 2019.

Climate Emergency.

Conference of the Parties (COP) Glasgow 2020 Proposal for Orkney Event.

Joint Report by Chief Executive and Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the principle of the Council seeking to engage with the UK and Scottish Governments in relation to holding an event during 2020 which would aim to showcase the ongoing projects and activities relating to climate change and a carbon neutral economy.

2. Recommendations

The Council is invited to note:

2.1.

That, on 24 September 2019, the Policy and Resources Committee considered a report providing an update on ongoing work to deliver upon the Council's declaration of a Climate Change Emergency.

2.2.

That one of the actions identified in the report, referred to at paragraph 2.1 above, was to consider appropriate fora and events to profile Orkney activity in this area, noting the potential to link an event to the United Nations Conference of the Parties Conference which has been confirmed for Glasgow for autumn 2020.

2.3.

That the Policy and Resources Committee subsequently recommended that the Chief Executive should submit a report, to the General Meeting of the Council scheduled for 8 October 2019, regarding the principle of seeking to engage with the UK and Scottish Governments in relation to holding an event in Orkney during 2020, linked to the United Nations Conference of the Parties to be held in Glasgow, which would aim to showcase the ongoing projects and activities relating to climate change and a carbon neutral economy.

It is recommended:

2.4.

That the principle of engaging with the UK and Scottish Governments in order to seek to secure an event in Orkney during 2020, linked to the Glasgow United Nations Conference of the Parties, be approved.

3. Background

3.1.

On 14 May 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and undertook to:

- Work with partners to continue to educate the community and promoting the understanding of the climate emergency.
- Work with partners to identify and implement actions our community can take to contribute to carbon reduction.
- Develop further delivery plan targets associated with this priority for consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee on 24 September 2019.

3.2.

This declaration reaffirmed the Council's existing target outcome for "a vibrant carbon neutral economy which supports local businesses and stimulates investment in all our communities" as stated in the Council Plan 2018 to 2023.

3.3.

On 24 September 2019, the Policy and Resources Committee considered a report which provided an update on ongoing work to deliver upon the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency.

3.4.

The update report included information on the work that has been done to date to engage with local stakeholders and established a number of actions and next steps which would now be explored further with local stakeholders with the aim of delivering concrete action to respond to the Declaration of a Climate Emergency. One of the actions identified for further consideration was to consider appropriate fora and events to profile Orkney activity in this area, noting the potential to link an Orkney event to the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP) conference which has been confirmed will take place in Glasgow in autumn 2020.

4. Proposed Orkney Event

4.1.

The Glasgow COP conference will be a major event, likely to attract up to 30,000 delegates. It will be preceded by preparatory events, and a youth event, to be held in Italy.

4.2.

Orkney has established a reputation as a world leader in a range of low carbon and energy management based initiatives. As such, there has been a regular succession of UK national and international political and business delegations to Orkney, keen to see first-hand the work underway.

4.3.

It is considered that the Glasgow COP is a major opportunity to showcase and profile Orkney positively on a significant international stage. It would also provide a focus for future contact with international or national delegations which would be more efficient and effective than the incremental approach which has been taking place in recent times. The opportunity to focus on Orkney profiling through association with the COP is significant, with one mechanism for achieving this being to seek to host a precursor event to the COP in Orkney.

4.4.

The Leader tabled the concept of an Orkney event with the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Roseanna Cunningham, during her visit to Orkney in August 2019. Following that initial discussion, the Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure has taken forward discussion with Scottish Government officials tasked with leading the planning for the Glasgow COP event. These discussions have indicated an initial level of positivity regarding the possibility of an Orkney event as part of the overall Scottish Government arrangements. However, it has been made clear that the mechanism for determining the detail for the COP is reserved with the UK Government. Scottish Government officials have confirmed that planning meetings are to begin during October and that they will make the UK Government aware of Orkney's ambition to have a leading position in that event where possible. Further details are likely to be available during November 2019.

4.5.

In advance of further information being received from the Scottish or UK Governments, it is considered appropriate for the Council to consider the principle of Orkney hosting an appropriate event, linked to the Glasgow COP, to profile Orkney. As noted above, no details are available of the extent of support which may be forthcoming for this proposal from the UK Government who will be the lead decision maker for the event, or indeed the Scottish Government who will have a significant role in the COP. However, at this stage it is considered appropriate for the Council to consider the principle of advocating the commitment to an Orkney event linked to the COP with further detailed analysis of that proposal to be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee in due course when more information is available.

5. Links to Council Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority theme of Enterprising Communities.

6. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority of Strong Communities and a Vibrant Economy.

7. Financial Implications

7.1.

There are no immediate financial consequences to the report recommendations.

7.2.

When the Council approved the revenue budget for 2019 to 2020 it reaffirmed that the policy of presumption against new commitments should continue to remain in force. An event of the kind envisaged in this report could have a cost that is significant, however the engagement with the UK and Scottish Governments would seek to secure funding for the Council to host the event. A failure to secure appropriate funding would mean that an existing service budget would require to cover the cost or the Council's agreed policy position would require to be revisited.

8. Legal Aspects

8.1.

In terms of Section 20 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has the power to do anything that it considers is likely to achieve the purpose of promoting or improving the well-being of its area and persons within its area, or either of those. The power includes power to incur expenditure, enter into arrangements or agreements with any third party and co-operate with any third party.

8.2.

The power in Section 20 of the 2003 Act includes power to do anything for the benefit of any persons or place outwith the area of the local authority if the Council considers that doing so is likely to achieve the purpose set out in Section 20 above.

9. Contact Officers

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