Agenda Item 6
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
21 January 2025

Title: Climate Change and Biodiversity Communications Update
Lead Officer: Chloe Wiltshire; Graham Folkes-Skinner; Becky Davies
Portfolio Holder: Lowell Williams (Decarbonisation); Will Roberts (Neighbourhood); Ian Davison (Strategic Leadership)
Wards of the District directly affected: All

Approvals required	**Date**	**Name**
Portfolio Holder	13 Jan 25	Cllrs Lowell Williams, Ian Davison and Will Roberts
Finance		Andrew Rollins
Legal Services		Not applicable
Chief Executive	13 Jan 25	Chris Elliot
Director of Climate Change	9 Jan 25	Dave Barber
Head of Service(s)	9 Jan 25	Dave Barber
Section 151 Officer		
Monitoring Officer	13 Jan 25	Graham Leach
Leadership Co-ordination Group		

Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?	Yes
Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?	No
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?	No
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	No
Accessibility Checked?	Yes

1. Summary: Why Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked for the report

1.1 A report was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2024 ("Climate Change and Biodiversity Reporting") that suggested that a further report should be provided in January 2025 to summarise and further explain climate change communications activities (Paragraph 2.12), especially Low Cost, Low Carbon Energy and Biodiversity Action Programme. This report is the first of a series of annual reports giving communications updates.

1.2 This report provides the principal communication initiatives undertaken within 2024 and summarises the planned work for between January and March 2025.

1.3 The report has been prepared in the context of the Climate Change Communications and Community Engagement Strategy which was agreed within a report presented to Cabinet in December 2023. (See Appendix 1)

1.4 Section 5 of the above Climate Change Communications and Community Engagement Strategy identifies the range of communication channels that can be used for both internal and external audiences and they are summarised in the table below.

1.5 Table 1 - Communication Channels

Internal	**External**
Member briefings and emails	Website updates
Staff updates – Intranet	Press releases
Webinars and carbon literacy training	Social media
Staff briefings	Resident's newsletters including Social Tenants newsletters
Sustainability Officers Group	Webinars and short videos
Clear and constant message from senior managers	Stakeholder groups and other partner organisations
Team Meetings	Conferences

1.6 To reflect the Corporate Strategy and subsequent Cabinet decisions, this report indicates which programmes of work are relevant to each communication initiative including the Biodiversity Action Programme (BAP); the Climate Change Action Programme (CCAP) and the Low-Cost, Low Carbon Programme (LCLC).

1.7 £13K has been set aside from the Climate Change budget for Communications and Engagement and that includes £8K for the Local Community Engagement (LCE) work (See Section 3.2 below)

1.8 The social media statistics highlighted in this report have been given different terminology and below is a glossary of the terms.

1.9 Table 2 – Glossary of social media statistics

Term	Definition
Engagement	Total number of people who have engaged with content, either by liking, commenting, replying, sharing etc.
Impressions	Total number of times content is displayed. (Can be viewed by the same person multiple times, making an "impression" on that person multiple times)
Open rate	Percentage of recipients that opened a newsletter email in relation to the total number of recipients.
Click rate	Percentage of recipients who clicked on a link in a newsletter in relation to the total number of recipients.
Reactions	Number of responses to a social media post, (i.e. "likes;" "shares;" "comments" and "saves")
Shares	The act of reposting the content of a social media post
Sentiments	The feeling or attitude expressed on social media regarding a social media post.

1.10 For context and clarity, the report is only highlighting the significant communication and engagement activities undertaken across the 2024 calendar year and the anticipated work during the first quarter of 2025 (January to April)

2. Communication highlights over past 12 months (Jan – Dec 2024)

2.1 Biodiversity Action Programme (BAP)

Biodiversity Action Programme (BAP) launch and related activities

2.1.1. The Biodiversity Action Programme (BAP) was launched in April 2024 with an "explainer" animation and a new website, where the BAP could be read in summary or in full.

2.1.2. Since April several other activities were linked to the BAP, including meadow management, spring bulb planting, the City Nature Challenge, the Big Butterfly Count, the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch and National Tree Week to maintain awareness of the BAP and the areas that it covers.

2.1.3. The launch press release issued in April 2024 was picked up, however, the focus was on the Council's participation in No Mow May rather than the BAP.

2.1.4. Table 3 – Summary of communication statistics for launch of BAP and related activities throughout 2024

Communication type	Numbers/Statistics
Press releases issued	1
Press Coverage	BBC Article - "No Mow May return after complaints in 2023" (16 April 2024) BBC The Guardian - "No Mow May: councils urge Britons to put away lawnmowers (3 May 2024) The Guardian Warwick Nub News – "No Mow

	May to return to Warwick and Leamington for 2024 – but have lessons been learned (16 April 2024) Nub News Warwickshire World – "Warwick District Council is once again joining No Mow May – and encouraging residents to join in"(16 April 2024) Warwickshire World
Video views	5,457
Social Media Posts	49
Engagement	1,042
Impressions	178,258
Newsletter subscribers	1,693
Newsletter open rate	58%
Newsletter click rate	17%
Website views	4,069*

*not all visitors to the website consent for their data to be tracked so this figure doesn't provide a completely accurate number of visitors.

Biodiversity Photography Competition 2024

2.1.5. The second biodiversity photography competition was launched in July 2024 with the theme, "bright, beautiful, great and small." The competition aimed to engage residents with the target habitats and species in the BAP, as well as provide more awareness about the need for a biodiverse and nature-rich environment.

2.1.6. Table 5 – Biodiversity Photography Competition Statistics

Communication Type	**Numbers/Statistics**
Competition entries	78 eligible entries (67 entries in over 18s category and 11 entries in 17 and under category)
Social media posts	14
Engagement	1,655
Impressions	92,458

2.2 Low Cost, Low Carbon Programme (LCLC)

Green Homes Grants

2.2.1 The Green Homes Grants scheme was delivered as part of what was called the Home Upgrade Grant Scheme (HUG2) and was designed to help improve the comfort and energy efficiency of lower income homes that are not heated by mains gas central heating.

2.2.2 The work was a collaboration between Warwick District, Act on Energy and

E.ON.

2.2.3 Table 6 – Green Homes Grants Statistics

Communication Type	**Numbers/Statistics**
Posters and leaflets printed	60
Letters printed and posted	6,784
Social Media posts	38
Engagement	122
Impressions	37,417

Home Energy Help Scheme

2.2.4 This initiative originated from the Climate Change People's Enquiry when one of the recommendations was to help householders that are "able to pay" with high quality retrofit advice and information.

2.2.5 The initiative was a 12-month pilot scheme, which concluded in July 2024.

2.2.6 A partnership was formed with the charity Act on Energy and a retrofit organisation called Furbnow, where Act on Energy would help with signposting and wider advice support and Furbnow would develop tailored and (paid-for) Home Energy Plans with optional project management.

2.2.7 The initiative was communicated in a variety of ways, including: -

- advertising in various newsletters including Low Carbon Warwickshire Network (LCWN); e-leaflets to 36 Community Groups; WDC weekly newsletter; emails to emails to local Councillors and Town and Parish Councils
- launch of new Act on Energy website
- 17 Community Engagement events, 12 of which were linked with Retrofit Action Week and Great Big Green Week.

2.2.8 Throughout the 12 months of the initiative, Act on Energy, collected a variety of communication statistics that have been summarised below.

2.2.9 Table 7 – Home Energy Help Scheme Statistics

Communication Type	**Number/Statistic**
Retrofit advice calls received	220
Average length of call	30-80 mins
Community Engagement events attended	17
No. receiving retrofit advice at events	>120
No. receiving "light-touch" advice	>215
No. of Community Groups receiving newsletter	36
No. of retrofit assessments/energy plans completed	6

2.3 Climate Change Action Programme

Better Points

2.3.1 The sustainable travel incentive initiative, termed, "Choose How You Move" hosted by Better Points was launched within Warwick District in 2021 and closed in November 2024.

2.3.2 Generic marketing materials were produced, both posters and flyers alongside social media content. Variants on these core designs were produced for specific promotions and partnerships, such as Chiltern Railways; Everyone Active and Stagecoach.

2.3.3 As of November 2024, there were 2567 signed up members of the public to the initiative with 26% considered to be active participants from the 1st-30th November. There were 9 local businesses signed up to the scheme and there have been 12 promotional events in 2024.

2.3.4 The largest of the above campaigns was Clean Air Day in June, where Climate Change Officers partnered with Air Quality colleagues, alongside Kenilworth Town Council and Warwickshire County Council. The event involved the closing of a 1.5-mile road route in the centre of Kenilworth which provided the opportunity to promote the benefits of active travel, alongside stalls and entertainment.

2.3.4 Table 8 – Clean Air Day Event, Kenilworth Statistics

Communication Type	**Numbers/Statistics**
Posters, banners and leaflets printed	Printed by Kenilworth Town Council
Social media posts	12
Story views	1,055
Facebook event responses	144
Engagement	166
Impressions	14,962
Video views	2,261

Eco-Fest

2.3.5 Returning for its fifth year in 2024, the event saw over 1500 members of the public visit the Pump Rooms in August.

2.3.6 It was a collaborative event, involving teams from Business Support and Events, Marketing and Communications and Climate Change working together with an external event coordinator.

2.3.7 The public were invited to engage in all aspects of the Climate Change Action Programme with a specific activity focused on retrofit.

2.3.8 Table 9 – Eco-Fest event statistics

Communication Type	**Numbers/Statistics**
Press release	1
Press coverage	Leamington Observer Pre-event "EcoFest set to turn Leamington Green" (9 August 2024) Leamington Observer pre-event Leamington Observer post-event "Everything goes green at Leamington EcoFest" (5 September 2024) Leamington Observer post-event

	Leamington Observer further coverage "Crowds enjoy inspirational theatre, bespoke stories and bee-keeping demo at Leamington EcoFest" (5 September 2024) further coverage Leamington Courier pre-event "Leamington's popular EcoFest event to return for its fifth year" (2 August 2024) Leamington Courier pre-event Leamington Courier post-event "In pictures: large crowd attends the fifth annual EcoFest at Pump Room Gardens in Leamington" (4 September 2024) Leamington Courier post-event BBC "Thousands expected for free eco-friendly event" (11 August 2024) BBC
Posters printed	30
Social Media posts	15
Story views	2,874
Facebook event responses	889
Engagement	494
Impressions	58,518
Website views	4,362

Installation of cycle parking, Newbold Comyn Pavilion

2.3.9 In collaboration with Warwickshire County Council and Leamington Park Run with financial backing from Leamington Town Council, three Sheffield stand "toast-rack" cycle stands were installed at Newbold Comyn Pavilion. A press release was produced and Leamington Mayor and local Councillors invited to its formal "opening"

2.3.10 Photo of formal opening of cycle stands

2.3.11 Appendix 2 illustrates the type of communications highlighted above.

3. Communication plans for next 3 months (Jan – Mar 2025)

3.1 Appendix 3 summarises the planned communications for the first 3 months of 2025.

3.2 Due to the lead officer for the Local Climate Engagement (LCE) leaving his role within the Climate Change team in September, this piece of work has lost its momentum. As Appendix 3 indicates however, there are plans to reinvigorate the initiative and could potentially be used as an important conduit for communication across the roles undertaken by the Climate Change team.

4. Any lessons learnt and plans for improvement

4.1 It is important to evaluate the success of any communication initiative to learn which activities worked well and which should be improved. An evaluation summary of the initiatives highlighted above can be found in Appendix 4

4.2 As the tables in Section 2 above indicate, we do measure the recognised evaluation tools for any communication initiative, by monitoring the media and web data, but arguably it could be considered that we need to do more within the Climate Change team to understand whether our communications are working and follow a simple plan for communication to consider some basic questions: -

- Why do we want to communicate? (What is the purpose?)
- Who do we want to communicate with? (Who's our audience?)
- What do we want to communicate? (What is the message?)
- How do we want to communicate it? (What communication channels will we use?)
- Who should we contact and what should we do to use those channels? (How will be distribute the message?)

4.3 The Climate Change team have a monthly internal communication meeting with the Media team and this report suggests that at an appropriate opportunity the group discusses the potential for an overarching communications plan that tie

together the campaign specific communication plans already in place and aligns with the Council's Corporate Strategy.

4.4 A basic evaluation process could be part of this communication plan as it can help to measure the success of a communication initiative and benchmark it against other projects and learn best practice from other initiatives, share ideas and potential work on joint communication activities. Dynamic monitoring and evaluation of our communications is essential during the initiative to ensure that we are reaching the right audience with the right messages. We can then adapt and amend our communication as required.

4.5 A good proportion of the communication work undertaken within the Climate Change team has the goal of changing behaviour; nudging perceptions, attitudes and opinions. A benchmarking survey would have enabled us to measure the effectiveness of our communication strategy in achieving that.

4.6 In a benchmarking survey target audiences are surveyed at the outset of a communications programme and then at the end. This will enable us to track the impact of our activities. However, there are resource and budget implications to undertaking formal benchmarking exercises and further consideration needs to be given to this subject, as currently there is not the resource and finances available to undertake this role.

5. The key risks to the service and how they are being managed

5.1 Communications is vital to promoting our key initiatives and projects, but we need clear aims and objectives to enable us to demonstrate tangible results and even with that, it can be a challenge.

5.2 We cannot always be sure of the impact of our communications and engagement activity and therefore it is not possible to demonstrate if it is value for money. However, the impact could be seen as people turning up to events, phone calls, responses to social media etc.

5.3 Perception and benchmarking data would be helpful but is likely to be costly and therefore impact on the ability to do other things within the Climate Change budget. Discussions could be had on the finances allocated against the marketing budget and the importance placed on this data to the success of the communications.

5.4 Communications and perceptions are heavily influenced by many things, including national messages, so isolating Warwick District's impacts is very difficult. Therefore, public perception and understanding of local projects and initiatives should be taken within the wider context of national and government initiatives.

5.5 Social media can sometimes be misused by the public resulting in virtual abuse and/or reputational damage. This risk can be mitigated by deleting inflammatory comments and/or turning off the comment section on sensitive or controversial posts.

6. One Change to improve performance

7.1 See Section 4.

Background papers:

Climate Change Action Programme Review Report – Cabinet December 2023 (Item 6)

Biodiversity Action Programme Report – Cabinet April 2024 (Item 6)

Low-Cost Low Carbon Energy Programme – Cabinet July 2024 (Item 4)

Supporting documents:

None