

**Topics: Commissions; Hydrotreated Vegetable Oils; Council Farms; Decarbonisation;
Nature recovery.**

Summary

- Cornwall Council is happy to continue meeting with a small group from the CCAC at regular intervals.
- There are now two distinct commissions that have been introduced: The Cornwall and IOS Climate Commission and The Fairness Commission.
- Cornwall Council are aware a number of houses (and schools) that still run on oil that could be run on a 20% blend HVO as a transition fuel without needing boiler upgrades. They are keen to adopt this, and for these properties to run on 100% HVO but that would have to be the tenants choice.
- Cornwall Council recognises how Community Supported Agriculture programs (CSAs) to improve biodiversity and to offset emissions (Fenton Fenna Farm already have a large degree of subletting where these practices could be encouraged more).
- The council themselves have 1800 tonnes that will need to be offset (20 ha by 2030). A further 4000 tonnes will need to be offset by the council, by this time, and there is no strategy as yet decided.
- Cornwall Council has agreed that there must be more emphasis on emission reduction due to fabric improvement rather than just decarbonised heating systems.
- There was no specific reference to nutrient neutrality in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); to some degree the council is delaying their local plan to see what control they have in this area.

Present:

Cornwall Council (CC):

Cllr Martyn Alvey: Portfolio holder for Environment and Climate Change

Mark Holmes: Manager Carbon Neutral Cornwall Team; Environmental Adaptation Service; Nature Recovery Team

Nick Hayden: Program manager for the carbon neutral team (reports to MH)

Cornwall Climate Action Coalition (CCAC):

John Carley

Andrew Stott

Tom Pine

Karen Jeffereys

i. Introduction by CCAC

- CCAC welcomed the Carbon Neutral Team Annual Report:
3425598751657f631022078090cb856b_Carbon_Neutral_Cornwall_Annual_Report_2023-24

**Notes for online meeting of Members of Cornwall Climate Action Coalition and Cornwall Council
18/11/2024**

- CCAC gave an update on the 15th November meeting with Justin Olosunde, Chair Cornwall & IOS Climate Commission (CIOSCC), Tim Jones Director Cornwall Climate Action Network and CIOSCC commissioner. The other attendees were Jackie Walkden, Lesley Fitt and John Carley.
- CC happy to continue meetings with a small group from CCAC.

1. Commissioning

1) **From the annual report:** *“decision has been made to mobilise a new Commissioning Group, chaired by Strategic Director for Sustainable Growth & Development to oversee commissioning and resourcing priorities required to progress key programmes of work”.*

2) **Article by Elliot Ball BBC News, South West. 12 October 2024**

The first chair of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Fairness Commission has been appointed: Tanuvi Ethunandan,

The newly created commission is designed to conduct research and find solutions to pressing issues surrounding health, poverty, and access to opportunity, a Cornwall council spokesperson said. The Commission would focus on efforts towards making Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly inclusive, accessible and a place of equal opportunity for all.

Question 1a: The Climate Commission has been set up to Challenge, catalyse and convene in relation to climate mitigation and adaptation, through an inclusive, nobody left behind approach. Has the Climate Commission raised with the Council any of the roles identified for ‘the new commissioning group’ and the Fairness Commission that cut across those of the Climate Commission?

Question 1b: Will the Council broker liaison between the Climate Commission and these two other groups, so that work areas complement and do not conflict?

- CC: The Fairness Commission was set up as a result of the work on the Climate Commission and it was seen that the process that we had followed could be replicated for a fairness commission. The three roles identified in the question are represented at the Leadership Board, which also incorporates organisations outside of the Council fold. Though their meetings collaboration where necessary and separation of work streams were necessary, can be identified.
- The reference in the question to a ‘*new Commissioning Group*’ reflects the terminology being used at the time the annual report was written. It was sitting underneath the carbon neutral board chaired by Phil Mason - strategic director sustainable growth and development. However, a new Council Leader Board was created to cut across a number of transformational activities that the council was undertaking; the decarbonisation agenda being one part of that. So, the commissioning group has become a new carbon neutral board that is still chaired by Phil Mason but now reports into the council lead board chaired by the chief exec.
- CCAC: confirmed we now have two commissions: The Cornwall and IOS Climate Commission and the Fairness Commission.
- Is the liaison between these two commissions via the Leadership Board rather than within the council and would the council do more to encourage liaison?
- CC: Yes with the Council having got these two Commissions off the ground that’s where the liaison should come through. One of the important things we did was to

get both chair's seats on the leadership board as that has the other important partners outside of the Council also sitting:: Health Service, business etc all who are equal stakeholders.

- Justin, the Chair of the Climate Commission, has in order to enable its function to catalyse convene and challenge, already brokered a 4 way partnership involving his Commission, the Economic Forum, the Local Nature Partnership and the Fairness Commission.
- The Council is moving to provide the necessary separation of itself from these entities, so that they can operate freely to determine priority actions, but at the same time invite the entities to liaise with the Leadership Board in order to maximise opportunities for alignment and avoid stepping on each other's toes.

2. Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO)

Mitchell & Webber are developing and using HVO that originates as a waste product from the food industry. It is not taking virgin feedstock from palm oil or other sources. Their imports from the USA are drawing from the waste supply chain of oil that has been used and would ordinarily be disposed of by burning.

Currently we have about 40-45,000 households in Cornwall (approx. 15%) using Kerosene based heating oil as their primary heating solution. Many of these are in rural areas. HVO offered initially as a blend with kerosene would not entail any modifications to existing boilers and upon progressing to 100% HVO only relatively minor and cost-effective modifications.

As an alternative to fossil fuels for domestic heating it is legitimate to view HVO as a quick win in terms of CO₂e emissions reduction, (Emissions: Kg Co₂ equivalent per kW hour – 0.036 for cooking oil base HVO as opposed to 0.298 for heating oil) to giving us more time to properly retrofit properties and reduce emissions that way. It therefore has potential as a transition fuel in the short to medium-term, although it is not a long-term solution to **very** low carbon heating.

Section 159 of the Energy Act 2023 offers the solution in the form of a Renewable Liquid Heating Fuel Obligation (RLHFO), which would allow these households to switch away from fossil fuels and use sustainable renewable liquid fuels such as Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO).

Question 2a: How many Cornwall Council owned homes, buildings and farmsteads are currently heated by oil?

Question 2b: What would be the GHG reduction for CC if these were run on 20% blend HVO?

Question 2c: Will the Council work through the Local Government Association and UK 100 to press the Civil Service to commence the consultation on RHLFO immediately and also press the Chancellor to remove the unfair duty on HVO for home heating?

- CC: we know that we have 250 council homes running on oil; we are awaiting a figure for farm estates. Then there is our operational estate schools etc to give you a combined approximate picture of 3000 + assets. Regarding HVO the LAEP comes out in early Jan for consultation and you will see that HVO it is part of those

conversations as there is a view that HVO is a transition fuel. The question is confidence in the availability of it but that appears to be growing. Aside from use in buildings we will be looking more closely at HVO use as a transition fuel in our Conserve and fire / rescue transport .

- CCAC: is there a plan to calculate emissions reduction if you were able to go over to 20% blend as since that is what Mitchell and Webber are suggesting to start with?
- CC: the understanding is that with 20% blend heating oil there is no need to do any adjustments to the boilers themselves. We would absolutely support that and in this connection the Council are represented at a visit to the pilot community at Kehelland next week to get the full tour. In terms of making a full conversion over to HVO, we are not in a position to force tenants in our housing and farms to adopt HVO. There might be some scope for us to support any adaptations to boilers to run off 100% HVO .
- CCAC: After discussion with Mitchell and Webber, we are lobbying the government to facilitate a 20% blend as there is no adaptation needed. Price is the limiting factor and this is why government needs to be lobbied. Supply is not thought to be a problem as there seems to be a lot of waste oil in USA. In any event, whilst the 20% blend is in adoption, it is possible to revert back to kerosene.
- CC: speaking with Mitchel and Webber, about the jet zero project, it is understood that one of the biproducts of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) is HVO. So, if aviation is required to use SAF then HVO should become plentiful.
- CCAC: Surely, we have more control over instructing or encouraging schools to start using HVOs.
- CC: surprisingly not, as schools are autonomous in their budgeting and spending and PFI arrangements can operate. So we might not have that level of control, and of course the cost is significantly more.
- Mitchell and Webber (who we have spoken to a lot as part of the LAEP) have been included as a partner for the transition. They, together with Bennaman (bio methane), sit on the Low Carbon Energy Group growth board. We have acted to support the finding of a solution to the renewable heating fuel obligations by looking at reaching cost parity with Kerosene and how to support it across different organisations. HVO is a key part of our thinking as a medium term transition fuel. CCAC - Will you be able to take this forward to UK100 to push forward the obligation?
- CC: In connection with progressing the Council's endorsement of HVO we submit case studies through to the UK100 around what is going, so yes but being clear we are promoting HVO not M&W.

3. Council Farms

Arguably, on the back of the Council being recognised via the Carbon Disclosure Project and Climate Emergency UK, innovation in the Council Farms estate holds huge potential in connection with food security, carbon offsetting / biodiversity net gain and energy. All mentioned in the Carbon Neutral Annual Report where it indicates: *'This is enabled by the adoption of carbon audits to identify areas within specific farming practices that will reduce the carbon intensity of farming and highlight opportunities for nature recovery, tree planting and renewable energy generation, including geothermal and in conjunction with Bennamann biomethane as well'* .

Question 3a: To give practical application to the emerging Cornwall Adaptation Strategy would the Council consider allocating part of selected Council farms over to Community Supported Agriculture programmes?

Question 3b: Is the Council going to confine offsetting to its own emissions by tree planting on its County farms, or would the Council also consider using its Council farms portfolio and other land assets to participate in the Natural Capital markets where income is derived by offering offsite biodiversity net gain / nutrient neutrality provision to developers meeting legislative requirements in these areas?

- CC: Yes this is possible as part of the Adaptation Strategy. Indeed, on the Roseland there is already a local growers scheme branded as a CSA which has taken a small portion of council farms. However, this would only be possible when a tenancy falls due for renewal and a local group is organised to set a CSA up, subject of course to the farm unit remaining viable.
- CCAC: My understanding of the CSA model is you would not be preventing your tenants from deriving an the income stream. The participants in a CSA would pay the farmer an amount of money so the tenant is swapping the vagaries of the market for a steady income stream.
- CC: This raises the issue of sub-letting, not insurmountable with agreement over the details from the farms estate.
- We have piloted a similar arrangement at Fenton Fenna Farm where the people who took the tenancy on, agreed to sub let with different operations on the estate. They have 14/15 different enterprises working on single farm estate employing between 2 to 300 people. It was the people behind Newquay Orchard who took the original lease on, and have taken that forward and seen some real benefits of that. It has created showcase for multiple occupancy model for the farms estate.
- We are looking at this at the moment. We are one of 4 pilots via the wealth, investment and capital programme.
- As with the CSA issue, we need to understand the impact on tenancy agreements as 25 - 30 year agreements would need to be signed. As many of the leases / tenancies don't operate over that period there are questions around whether it would lead to the council to taking prospective BNG elements of the farms estate out of circulation.
- In addition, it would require a creation of a special purchase vehicles to administer those assets. In this connection we are currently a reviewing of what that looks like considering the legalities of setting up special purpose vehicles.
- There is currently about 50 sites in the county with potential for biodiversity net gain. Nutrient neutrality is another potential offset option coming forward. In connection with calling for sustainable development and impacts on the natural environment this all crosscuts into working up the local plan and the refresh of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- We have got approvals corporately to take and explore some of these opportunities.
- The outturn of the current consultation on the local nature recovery strategy alongside the LAEP the last cabinet meeting of this administration in March.

- In addition the development of a nature recovery action plan will evidence how CC will deliver their 30 by 30 requirements using the principles of low energy recovery strategy to underpin that plan. Taken together; our farm estates assets and all the wider natural environment estate covering 5% of Cornwall, presents opportunity and challenge. This includes whether other entities in Cornwall might manage these.
- CCAC: encouraging that there is scope for both offsetting the Council's own emissions and also other entities required to secure BNG for their developments.
- CC: the council farms are very heavily tested area for a range of different activity. In terms of our own emissions there is forecasted to be 1800 tonnes to be offset by 2030 equating to 20 hectares of tree planting. They are also forecasting over 4000 tonnes will need to be offset at that time. There is no offset strategy confirmed yet.
- With In addition, Bio Chaff is being looked into as a potential offset programme and a potential commercial opportunity (**Note** Bio Chaff is the initial component of biofuel energy production. It cannot be used directly for fuel, and must be processed in a Canning Machine (into Biomass) for it to be of further use).

4. Decarbonisation

Draft Housing Decarbonisation Strategy Consultation, 5/7 to 16/9 2024. The priority outlined by the consultants used to produce the draft strategy, which was for replacement of carbon-based heating systems (generally with heat pumps) was criticized for not instead prioritising measures for demand reduction and energy efficiency.

Question 4: With the Council accepting the criticism, how is it being built into the revised version of the Housing Decarbonisation Strategy?

- CC: we have had generally, the strategy was received positively there were some general themes around retrofit and heat pump technology. This has been taken on board and the revised strategy has been taken to cabinet and it will be in the public domain soon. We will see far more emphasis on fabric retrofit as a key priority whilst not losing sight of the need to decarbonise heating systems.
- CC: At cabinet last week it was made clear that a shortcoming was that the Strategy did not incorporate HVO as a transition fuel. It was realised there was a risk of the emerging LAEP and the housing decarbonisation strategy not aligning.
- We are now though in a much closer position of alignment so that when the LAEP comes out you will see much more balance between retrofit and heating decarbonisation.

5. Nature Recovery

1. From the annual report:

"Cornwall Council is nearing completion on the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy".

2. Pui-Guan Man 4/9/24 Daily Telegraph.

Mr Thomas said Barratt had discussed **nutrient neutrality** with the Government, along with trade body the Home Builders Federation, and in his capacity as chairman of industry organisation Future Homes Hub. *"If we don't unblock it, you can see that we'll end up with 250,000 or 300,000 homes that are stalled in planning because of it (nutrient neutrality)."*

Question 5a: Nutrient neutrality and biodiversity net gain are key pillars for the Council in meeting its ambition for nature recovery. Will the Council work through the Local Government Association and UK 100 to push back against lobbying by the likes of the Home Builders Federation?

Question 5b: Will the Council incorporate specific precepts on Nutrient Neutrality and Biodiversity Net Gain in the forthcoming revision of the Local Plan?

- CC: Yes as far as we can. I think that the challenge we have at the moment is the lack of policy; this is at the end of a consultation and we are waiting to see how that lands. CC responded to the LDPF but not sure if we had an opportunity to comment on nutrient neutrality in the 130 questions that they asked us. The expected revision of National Planning Policy (**Note**: a new NPPF is expected to be published around Christmas) to a degree is delaying our new Local Plan so we are waiting to see what control we will have in this area.
- We recognise the need for both BNG and nutrient neutrality and are looking at both of these together with carbon capture and flood attenuation etc. We are really keen to ensure that the local nature recovery strategy is adopted ahead of the local plan refresher so that it can inform the development of the local plan.
- CCAC: when will the government settle to what will be the next NPPF?
- CC: In spring. It will bring the new housing numbers mandate by Jan 2025, but it appears that it does not include nutrient neutrality.
- There was no specific reference to nutrient neutrality however flagged it up and the need to consider its impact. Similarly, whilst the draft NPPF references nature recovery it does not give any detail in what they are meaning. In the letter that the Council sent to the sec of state we flagged up DEFRA to make sure they are feeding into this aspect well.
- You can expand on the National Policy in the Local Plan as has been done in the Local DPD what you cannot do is contradict it.
- CCAC: A concern is that they are not going to put in precepts around energy efficiency in the way that they need to.
- CC: We are in the adaptation area now rather than mitigation. We are hoping the government will adopt schedule 3 in the water management act which basically brings in SENS approval bodies but that has nothing to do with nutrient neutrality. In the context the topic of adaptation is almost a Cinderella for us at the moment. Schedule 3 is vital! (**Note** the implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) is a necessity. With the increasing frequency of extreme weather events and urban flooding, the importance of effective drainage design has never been more critical. The UK government's introduction of Schedule 3 to the Flood & Water Management Act mandates (if adopted) the integration of SuDS in new developments to mitigate flood risks and manage surface water effectively)
- CCAC: We would ask that when anything emerges regarding the NPPF that in respect of nutrient neutrality and biodiversity net gain you work collectively with other authorities and the usual channels to push the 4 corners of the envelope as far as they will stretch.

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- CC: yes we do. We have representation sitting on different UK100 groups and other members + officers sit on the Regional association and adaption and working groups, all part of bringing together consensus voices to feed into various responses.
- CCAC: is it your experience that in networking with subscribers to UK100 and members of the local government association that by and large consensus emerges or is there a big diversion seen when it comes to climate adaptation?
- CC: within the rural groups that we are members of yes, there is quite a convergence It is not certain though that the rural consensus holds sway with our urban colleagues. Significant when the urban set represents the majority of the population!
- This is a challenging consideration when trying to press the rural voice on National Policy positions. For example, developing a national industrial strategy ends up being urban centric, leaving rural areas trailing behind, particularly on funding.

Cornwall Council Public Consultations:

- Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) to be released Jan 2025

Latest reports from Carbon Neutral team:

- **Carbon Neutral Cornwall Annual Report 2023/24**
<https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/reports-and-reviews> listed as [View Carbon Neutral Cornwall 5 year update](#)
- **Cornwall Council Emissions Inventory Report 2023-24.** June 2024
3425598751657f631022078090cb856b_Carbon_Neutral_Cornwall_Annual_Report_2023-24
- <https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/hub-page/carbon-neutral-cornwall>
- **Cornwall Council website**, quick link to the reports and reviews page on the Hive: This brings together key Cornish reports, including links to the action plan, inventories, performance reports and DPD.
<https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/reports-and-reviews>

Notes from previous meetings between members of CCAC and CC

- 2022 - 2024:
<https://www.cornwallclimateactioncoalition.org.uk/meetingcouncilnotes.html>
- prior to Oct 2022:
<https://www.cornwallclimateactioncoalition.org/meetings-with-cornwall-council.html>