

**Topics: Training; Resourcing Carbon Neutral Team; Demands on Local Authorities; Scope 3 Emissions; Cornwall Council Farms Estate; Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)**

**Summary:**

- The intention is that all Councillors will receive climate literacy training. However, there is a faction within the membership of the council who may well seek to drop climate training and so alter the code of conduct.
- CC want to maintain spending at current levels for the Carbon Neutral team, although due to budgetary requirements this may need revisiting.
- CC still run their contract with the Uni of Exeter who review the Cornwall Greenhouse Gas Inventory, albeit accepting that the data disclosure is always 2 years in arrears. However, CC working with National Energy System and Regional Energy Plan, to inform the LAEP development process, is expected to lead to the development of central data sources.
- The reference to the Cornwall Live bulletin about the idea that the Council could reduce its £1.2 billion debt by selling off its farms estate was made by a Reform councillor. Though accepting that we can do better, we are going to have an enquiry into the future of County Farms, led not by the cabinet, but by scrutiny backbench councillors chaired by Cllr Connor Donnithorne.
- Regarding CCAC participation in this process... Councillor Connor Donnithorne is the person to ask.
- CC completed some work to help develop the bond investment model but have not introduced this yet.
- At the November 12th Cabinet meeting, the report will review the work to date and recommend how we reprofile targets post this stage (regarding the LAEP).
- CC believe findings from community conversations have great potential to form part of the vital evidence base for the emerging Local Plan.

**Present:**

**Cornwall Council (CC)**

Cllr Leigh Frost:	Lead Cornwall Council
Cllr Loic Rich:	Portfolio holder for Environment and Climate Change
Nick Hayden:	Program manager for the carbon neutral team (reports to MH)
Mark Holmes:	Manager Carbon Neutral Cornwall Team; Environmental Adaptation Service; Nature Recovery Team

**Cornwall Climate Action Coalition (CCAC)**

John Carley  
Karen Jeffereys  
Tom Pine  
Andrew Stott

## i. Introduction by CCAC

- Action from last meeting: CC to put Leigh and Loic directly in touch with Chrys McClaren to further conversation with Why Eat Plants? (WEP).

## 1. Training

### Question 1: What training around the climate and nature crisis will the new Cornwall councillors undertake?

- **CC:** The intention is that all Councillors will receive climate literacy training, amongst all the other training modules. At a basic level it will be held as mandatory and should be completed within 6 months from time of election.
- It will be drawn to the attention of those councillors who might resist climate training that it is a code of conduct issue, the terms of which passed through the constitution and governance committee near the end of the last administration.
- It continues to be a commitment to the climate emergency declared in 2019.
- Over and above the basic climate literacy training there will be all member briefings and further Climate Literacy Training, which includes the science behind the climate crisis as well.
- Now we are further along, we have a better idea of what our net zero capability and potential is. We may not necessarily be hitting all the targets, but the drive from the Carbon Neutral Team towards carbon neutrality is being embedded across every Council department. In this respect it is evident from attendance at conferences that our Carbon Neutral Team is in the vanguard and has been imparting its experience to other local authorities.
- The use of the words '*Net Zero*' has become sullied and is provocative to the wider public. Instead, we intend our future discourse to relate to '*tackling climate change*' instead.
- **CCAC:** Is it your perception that some councillors resist climate related training for political reasons and what is your response to such positions?
- **CC:** There is a faction within the membership of the council who may well seek to drop climate training and so alter the code of conduct. In addition, there is concern that a motion may be tabled to appeal the climate emergency declaration of 2019. However, it is hoped that there are a sufficient number to vote down such a motion.
- **CCAC:** Would working up a new resolution to affirm the current position of the council on climate be an idea?
- **CC:** It is an option, particularly as there is councillor viewpoint within the Reform group that does not concur with the national position of Reform. However, we need to gauge sentiment carefully and only move forward in a way which does not stir up a hornet's nest!

- It might be that there are councillors that don't believe in net zero, but our investment in renewable energy, e.g. solar at County Hall, are investments which together with the development of the LAEP are initiatives which are going to employ people and create energy – the social and economic drivers. It would therefore be odd if this were not supported across the board.

## 2. Resourcing Carbon Neutral Team

With the new Council administration now in place, the process of determining priority areas for resource allocation is pressing. The backdrop for this was the Government spending review in June which, for local councils, fell short of what was needed to relieve precarious local authority finances. A key resource allocation issue is anticipating and preparing local communities for ratcheting climatic impacts. The Carbon Neutral Team within the Council is in place to run this agenda, including by coordinating the implementation of the recommendations that emerge from Cornwall's Climate Commission.

**Question 2: Will the allocation of resources for the Carbon Neutral Team adequately match a verifiable assessment of the roles it needs to undertake, or instead will the allocation of resources be based upon a share of the revenue available to support other Council functions, such as the welfare demands?**

- **CC:** We want to maintain spending at current levels and not cut the Carbon Neutral Team. Notwithstanding this, money is tight, and this will not improve for the next 3 years or more, so we do need to do things differently.
- For example, we want to liaise with the Cornwall Climate Commission over holding a Green Finance Investment Forum to see what Cornwall can offer to those pursuing or interested in the green economy.
- **CCAC:** Could the idea of a Cornwall green bond available to the public to invest in a fund at a known fixed % be a runner as a means of supporting green ventures?
- **CC:** We will look into this. However, we have previously done some proprietary work on bond mechanisms, and we can draw on this, not least as a means of maximising local participation.

### 3. Demands On Local Authorities

Regen have made it clear that the disconnect between energy and spatial planning is hindering progress. Within the RTPI Research of May 2025 it says:

*“Integrating energy planning with town planning is key to ensuring that energy projects and programmes identified through an energy plan have the policy backing, public engagement, and regulatory teeth, to be developed.”*

**Question 3: What formal governance arrangements is the Council going to put in place so that the evidence and projections produced from energy plans, will inform local plan development and vice versa and how will respective development timetables be managed so that they align as much as possible?**

- **CC:** We have already moved on this, with the creation of the Sustainable Growth and Place Dept. This has bought the relevant functions under one service director in one area of the council. So, we are connecting with the Local Plan team, the Good Growth team, Local Transport team, Housing Decarbonisation team, Nature Recovery team and Climate Adaptation team.
- This interconnection will form the evidence base which will underpin the refresh of the local plan.
- **CCAC:** That is really good news and will prevent any silo thinking!

### 4. Scope 3 Emissions

The Carbon Trust has said:

*‘While measuring Scope 3 emissions can be challenging, addressing them is critical to developing a credible climate change strategy and supporting more informed decision making’.*

The Council has had a contract with the company: CO2 Analysis to cover the Scope 3 issue, in acknowledgement that the bulk of carbon emissions are in supply chains. Their ‘Green Insight’ carbon accounting engine goes through all procurement data in order to analyse supply chain emissions. However, maintained schools and county farms, together with adult social care appear to be out of scope for accounting by CO2 Analysis! Also, within the RTPI Research of May 2025 it says:

*“Meanwhile, data, analysis and engagement produced through energy planning processes can be used to develop robust evidence to underpin net zero compliant town planning policies. Aligning evidence bases, adopting a holistic approach to planning and engaging meaningfully with communities, local authorities can address many of the challenges currently facing both energy and town planning processes.”*

**Question 4: Is the Council going to review its CO<sub>2</sub> analysis contract in the light of both the emission areas that are out of scope for data collection and also the likely need to set new contractual expectations. This so that data collection is aligned with the specific expedient of providing the evidence base for the development of the new Local Plan?**

- **CC:** We still run our contract with the Uni of Exeter who review the Cornwall Greenhouse Gas Inventory, albeit accepting that the data disclosure is always 2 years in arrears. However, our working with National Energy System and Regional energy plan, to inform the LAEP development process, is expected to lead to the development of central data sources.
- In addition, we are reviewing the 'CO<sub>2</sub> Analysis' contract, using our membership of the University SW Energy Environment Group, (SWEEG), where we work with their academics to review the data.
- We also input our own Scope 1 & 2 data which is only 1 year in arrears, and we are seeking data collection as part of our contracts procurement processes. In addition, we are using a series of proxy measures that give a more up to date data set, such as progress towards renewable energy installations, EV charge points, % of EV vehicles etc. We have also proposed to get those organisations involved in energy planning to draw down standardised data themselves from the utility companies. All together this is the best we can do without funding to review the models or trying to create a local system.
- **CCAC:** Let us hope it holds up in the face of other authorities who may have already arrived at a peer leading local plan!
- **CC:** There are not many Local Authorities ahead of us in Local Plan preparation as everybody is awaiting guidance.

## **5. Cornwall Council Farms Estate**

Cornwall Council, in common with many local authorities, is carrying a significant debt. The latest government spending review in June fell short of what was needed to improve the finances of local councils. A cabinet member put it to the Sustainable Growth Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 29th of July that the Council could reduce its £1.2 billion debt by selling off its farms estate. The Committee, agreed to establish a three month "task and finish" group to hold an inquiry into the future of the council farms estate comprising 10,800 acres across 81 farms. Arguably, the council farm estate falls within the definition of a 'Commons asset.' Common Land refers to our shared natural resources that have been bequeathed to us. On this pretext a leading question is whether it is within, certainly the ethical, gift of the Council to sell off its farm estate? The long-term benefit of selling the council farms estate is questionable. Somerset Council sold off 62 of its council farms in 2010, with more sold since, but is still running a £100m budget gap for 2025/2026. The opportunity costs of disposing of council farms estate include foregoing revenue from providing the 'natural capital' sought by developers to achieve their legally binding

biodiversity net gain. The county farms portfolio could be managed, at least in part, in order 19.8.25 CCAC Agenda for Cornwall Council and Members of Cornwall Climate Action Coalition Teams Meeting Tuesday 9th September 2025, 2 pm - 3pm to list on the Gov.UK Biodiversity gain sites register. A local example being the Mawgan Habitat Bank. Another opportunity cost of disposal would be in local food security, where revenue could be realised from future Farm Business Tenancies held by community supported agricultural (CSA) schemes such as Newquay Orchards. Yet another opportunity cost would occur if disposal of the estate prevented action area 4.3.7 from the LAEP being implemented, whereby the council farms portfolio would work with local company Bennammin to become an exemplar in demonstrating the capture of fugitive biomethane and the development of energy independent farming.

**Question 5: What opportunity could there be for CCAC representation on any group or inquiry into the future of the County Farms estate?**

- **CC:** The reference to the Cornwall Live bulletin about the idea that the Council could reduce its £1.2 billion debt by selling off its farms estate was made by a Reform councillor. Through accepting that we can do better, we are going to have an enquiry into the future of County Farms, led not by the cabinet but by scrutiny backbench councillors chaired by Cllr Connor Donnithorne.
- It will look at good examples of council farms that have diversified. One such is Fentenfenna Farm out at Ruthvoes which is run by Newquay Orchards.
- There will be people invited to participate in the enquiry from Cornwall Council, other local authorities who run farm estates and of course farmers, landowners and growers. It is thought the CC may be the right custodian going forward for some of the farm units, but not in all instances. So, we will be looking at who might be better placed to take some of the farm units on. That might be trusts or parish/town councils. In some instances, there might also be disposal through selling those assets.
- Regarding CCAC participation in this process Councillor Connor Donnithorne is the person to ask.
- **CCAC:** In this connection, as you can see in the context for the question we have set out some of the opportunity costs of the Council not retaining control of County farms.
- **CC:** In relation to the possibility of raising revenue from providing the 'natural capital' sought by developers to achieve their legally binding biodiversity net gain, we went through a partnership with Entrade where we have made a call for sites for biodiversity net gain (BNG).
- There is not any net gain at this point, but the council could put sites into that. Then, developers could buy their biodiversity credits (units) through the Entrade process,

which uses an arbitration algorithm so that the buyer and seller both get a good price.

- This avoids the ‘take it or leave it’ outcomes that emerge when you have landowners, developers and legal firms involved. The savings are distributed between the two parties.
- For example, SUEZ bought their BNG requirements on one of our council owned former mines. They used the development levy on a waste processing plant, which was required for our food waste collection strategy, to improve biodiversity but also the management of that asset.
- We have had an open call, as part of the Cornwall local plan process, for biodiversity sites to come forward. We are reviewing our own assets not just for biodiversity net gain but also in connection with other emerging voluntary and statutory markets.
- Also, the Council has a large capital programme involving built assets and housing etc where we will have a biodiversity net gain obligation. We may meet these using our own assets. This is not just via our farms, as we have some large open spaces such as Kit Hill.
- **CCAC:** If the public were able to buy bonds, then the revenue from that could be used to develop the BNG sites where that capital may not be immediately available to the council?
- **CC:** We did some work to help develop the bond investment model but have not introduced this yet. We see that there are opportunities to look at ‘Community Right to Buy’ linked to a renewable energy development. Here, the objective would be to enable communities to compete with developers for shares in a renewable energy installation.
- With regard to Council farms the Council have almost been holding tenants back. The units have been worked in a way that is not always good for the environment.
- We need to look at what to do with those units to make them more productive in terms of growing food and creating biodiversity for the BNG natural capital market. There is a lot of people keen to get involved. You can be innovative and imaginative but still stay true to a farming ethos.
- **CCAC:** The Bennamann project is a case in point: taking a problem of dairy farm wastes and producing green energy from it. Presumably, Cornwall Sustainable Food will be part of the enquiry into county farms?
- **CC:** This enquiry is going to be led by ordinary members of the council; it is not a cabinet led activity. They may also look at some sort of trust or alms houses because there is a real issue with retiring farmers, and a huge issue of homelessness and isolation. All in all, there is a lot of stuff that needs to be talked about with our farms.
- **CCAC:** A question to put to Councillor Connor Donnithorne at the Cornwall Great Green Energy Summit at Chacewater on Sunday 14th Sept is how can CCAC form part of the enquiry?

- **NB.** Councillor Donnithorne was unable to attend, so the question has not yet been put!

## 6. LAEP

**Question 6: There has been delay and the LAEP is now not going to another public consultation. What, then is going to be voted on, regarding the LAEP, at the November 12th Cabinet meeting?**

- **CC:** Essentially, at the November 12th Cabinet meeting the report will review of the work to date and recommendations on how we reprofile targets post this stage, and incorporate the six learnings from progress to date. From this the council will reset its commitments on the climate and ecological emergency. This will involve re-profiling, developing and refreshing the carbon action plan work.
- The LAEP will form an important part of the committee report as will the intention to draw in the Climate Commission and others to produce a Cornwall wide approach.
- Following the November cabinet committee the intention is to focus on the implementation of the tabled LAEP actions. There is value in retesting public support, this time though over the implementation of actions laid out in the LAEP. In this connection working with yourselves and through the climate conversations you wanted to run at community level in order to go deeper into some of those areas, could start to add value to the Local Plan development.
- In particular, if community conversations included the big areas of public debate around land use and renewables on land, transport decarbonisation and homes you will cover the 3 really important topics to people. However, the focus for the community conversations would centre around how are we going to do some of the scheduled LAEP actions with reference to the 'land use study' shortly to be published by the planning team.
- This study will cover renewable deployment on agricultural land, maximising rooftop solar on domestic, non-domestic and brown field sites. We have just started exploring this domain with 3 members of the Climate Commission.
- **CCAC:** From our standpoint the difficult part is working up the right questions for community conversations.
- **CC:** One approach to this at community conversations would be to get the take on what low carbon model village / town concept could look like if the 3 really important topics referred to above are brought into being together with what are the barriers and opportunities to reaching that point. In the mix for the conversations could be ideas around shared ownership and retained benefit within communities.

- Of course, the arisings from community conversations have great potential to form part of the vital evidence base for the emerging Local Plan. Also, there is a need to attract private finance into LAEP actions implementation and this in turn should secure public support. Ideally all this would feed into those investor forums when we start to attract investment into Cornwall for LAEP actions implementation.

### **Date for next meeting**

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2pm – CCAC & CC online meeting

### **Notes from previous meetings between members of CCAC and CC**

<https://www.cornwallclimateactioncoalition.org/meetings-with-cornwall-council.html>

### **Relevant Meeting Dates**

- 07/10/2025 – PUBLIC meeting – Sustainable Growth and Development Scrutiny Committee – this agenda will be discussed
- 12/11/2025 – Cornwall Council Cabinet meeting – voting on the above agenda

### **Cornwall Council Public Consultations**

- Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) published 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025  
<https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/laep>

### **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**  
3425598751657f631022078090cb856b\_Carbon\_Neutral\_Cornwall\_Annual\_Report\_2023-24
- <https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/hub-page/carbon-neutral-cornwall>
- **Cornwall Council website**  
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>