

**SCOTLAND'S CLIMATE CHANGE DECLARATION**

23. There was submitted a report (docketed) dated 24 January 2007 by the Director of Planning and Environment (1) advising that the Scottish Executive had promoted the Scottish Climate Change Declaration, which it was anticipated would be signed by all Councils and was a commitment from local authorities (a) which recognised the challenge that climate change posed; (b) which acknowledged the work already being done to address this, and (c) to produce a plan to improve and report on performance on climate change; (2) indicating that the Executive was developing a support package to assist local authorities to implement the commitments in the Declaration, and (3) reporting that the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader of the Council, had agreed to sign the Declaration.

**Decided:**

- (1) that the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to sign the Scottish Climate Change Declaration be homologated, and
- (2) that the report be remitted to all Committees for their information.

## REPORT

To: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE	Subject: Scotland's Climate Change Declaration
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT	
Date: 6 February 2007	Ref: PI/EPT/07/16/LB

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To inform Committee of the Scottish Climate Change Declaration that has been promoted through the Scottish Executive, to clarify what the implications of the Declaration are for Councils and to homologate the decision by the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council to sign the Declaration.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Changing Our Ways: Scotland's Climate Change Programme (SCCP), published by the Scottish Executive in March 2006, recognises that climate change is one of the most serious threats facing the world today. The Programme sets a framework which aims to deliver carbon savings through the setting of Scotland's first carbon target, and to reduce Scotland's vulnerability to climate change. The SCCP is one of the main delivery programmes for Choosing our Future: Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy.
- 2.2 Scotland's Climate Change Programme also recognises that local government is Scotland's largest public sector employer and, as such, has the potential to play a key role in tackling climate change through both its own activities and its influence on the wider community. Development of Scotland's Climate Change Declaration and support mechanism, initially aimed at local authorities, is a commitment in the SCCP and supports a longer-term commitment to develop a climate change programme for local government in Scotland.
- 2.3 Scotland's Climate Change Declaration has been developed by an extensive group of organisations. Members of this Development Group are: The Scottish Executive; the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA); the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) - Scotland; the Improvement Service; the Sustainable Scotland Network (chair); the Energy Saving Trust; the Carbon Trust; the Local Energy Support Programme; the UK Climate Impacts Programme; and the Scotland and Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research (SNIFFER). East Dunbartonshire Council and Aberdeen City Council have participated in the Development Group as representatives of the Sustainable Scotland Network Steering Group. The Improvement and Development Agency has also been supporting the initiative.
- 2.4 The Declaration is a commitment from the local authority that recognises the challenge climate change poses; acknowledges the work already being done to address this; and to produce a plan to improve and report on its performance on climate change.
- 2.5 It is intended that the Declaration should in turn assist local government to:

- make a greater commitment to work on climate change;
- improve performance within its own services and activities; and
- promote local activity.

2.6 It is anticipated that all 32 Councils will sign the Declaration. The Declaration has been fully endorsed by Council Leaders at COSLA, and a formal announcement was made on 16 January. It is expected that most councils will sign the Declaration in January, with others signing soon thereafter.

2.7 It is recognised that implementing the Declaration will present challenges. However, a support package is being developed to assist local authorities to implement the commitments in the Declaration. It will be through the work of the Declaration Development Group organisations and with input from local authority officers that the nature of this support will be identified and developed.

2.8 The need for a Declaration is widely supported. Leadership and senior level commitment is vital to any successful work within local authorities. The Declaration is an expression of political and corporate leadership by the signatory authorities.

### **3. Sustainability Implications**

3.1 The Declaration highlights the major role which Local Authorities have to play in ensuring the Executive delivers its climate change goals by leading the way in delivering sustainable development locally.

### **4. Key Considerations**

4.1 Climate change is not just a threat for the future, it is a reality now. Scotland is already feeling the effects of climate change. Winter storms have doubled in frequency in the UK over the last 50 years. Recently temperatures in Scotland have risen and rainfall has increased dramatically in the winter months. In the future Scotland is expected to have more extreme weather with warmer, wetter winters, up to 90% less snowfall, sea levels rises of up to 600mm threatening coastal areas and an increased risk of flooding.

4.2 Scotland's communities will be in the front line in responding to the impacts of climate change and have a role in reducing emissions of greenhouse gases that are contributing to climate change

4.3 As identified in Scotland's Climate Change Programme local government is well-placed to tackle climate change, both as a local regulator and steward. Community Planning, Best Value and strategic environmental assessment duties have added a legal imperative to address climate change in local plans, programmes and partnerships.

4.4 While legislation like the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 provided relatively clear direction, this is limited in its scope. Overall, work to mitigate and adapt to climate change has varied between local authorities and the Declaration seeks to stimulate further action on climate change by cutting through the confusion and advocating a more structured and cross-service approach.

### **5. Corporate Considerations**

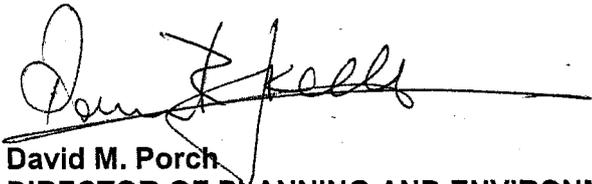
5.1 The Declaration has implications for the work of the Council. Signing the Declaration commits the Council to publishing a plan aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with targets and timescales, and to integrate greenhouse gas reduction and climate change adaptation measures into all new plans and strategies. The Executive will be developing a support package to assist local authorities to implement the commitments in the Declaration.

5.2 It is the intention that the climate change plan, targets and timescales will be reported through the Housing and Environment Corporate Working Group using the Council's Sustainable Development Statement and its monitoring mechanisms.

## 6. Recommendations

6.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) homologate the decision of the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council to sign the Scottish Climate Change Declaration.
- (ii) remit this report to all Committees for their information.



David M. Porch  
**DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT**  
(24<sup>th</sup> January 2007)

Local Government Access to Information Act: for further information about this report, please contact Lorna Bowden, on 01236-616479.

Background Paper: Scottish Executive: Changing Our Ways: Scotland's Climate Change Programme, March 2006