

York Green Jobs Taskforce

INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out a vision and strategic objectives for the future of the City for a 20 year period. This was approved by the Without Walls Local Strategic Partnership and the City of York Council following extensive public consultation and involvement during 2008.

The vision is for the city of York to:

- build confident, creative and inclusive communities
- be a leading environmentally-friendly city
- be at the forefront of innovation and change with a prosperous and thriving economy
- be a world class centre for education and learning for all
- to be able to celebrate its historic past whilst creating a successful and thriving future.

There is an explicit ambition in the Sustainable Community Strategy to balance physical growth and environmental sustainability by making responsible choices in respect of climatic and environmental challenges.

The Thriving City theme of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) sets the strategic context for initiatives to enhance the prosperity of the City. In doing so, it is generally recognised that enhancing prosperity is important not just for the economy. A strong and prosperous economy generating enhanced employment options and incomes contributes to and enables actions in relation to lifelong learning, anti-poverty, social inclusion, anti-social behaviour, housing provision, cultural provision, spatial planning, transport and environmental quality. There are therefore strong linkages with the other themes set out in the SCS.

Climate change is a long term threat to the future prosperity of the city. There are two distinct impacts from this: (a) the impact and requirements of the Climate Change Act which sets ambitious targets to dramatically reduce carbon emissions and cut the use of fossil fuels; and (b) the potential opportunities to develop a low carbon economy through creating new business and job opportunities. With respect to (a) work is underway within the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership to complete a Climate Change Action Plan which will be in place by early 2010. With respect to (b), increasing evidence suggests that new employment opportunities will be created in the next few years within environmental industries. The Government's "Low Carbon Industrial Strategy" suggests that up to 400,000 new jobs could be created nationally over the next 8 years in environmental industries. York is well placed through existing and new initiatives to act as a significant centre for such new employment opportunities, and this is the focus of consideration within this report, as part of the economic development strategy for the city.

The council has established the Green Jobs Taskforce to consider how best to develop a low carbon economy in York. The Taskforce brings together the appropriate expertise both from within the council and outside (interest having been

invited at York Business Forum). The recommendations from the Taskforce are set out below. The Taskforce has used the Local Government Association publication "Creating Green Jobs; developing low-carbon economies" as a guide in shaping these recommendations. In making this report back to the City of York Council, the Taskforce recognises the need for further consultation, particularly through the Without Walls Local Strategic Partnership and its constituent thematic partnerships, to continue the debate and take forward implementation of initiatives to create "green jobs" in York.

WHAT ARE "GREEN JOBS"?

In order to meet the requirement to dramatically reduce carbon emissions, developing a low carbon economy will necessitate a technological revolution in energy use and supply. This will impact on existing sectors of the economy as well as creating new markets, for example in carbon trading, the development of renewable and low carbon sources of energy, energy efficiency, as well as research and development opportunities.

The expectation is that these new markets will grow significantly. Nationally, it is estimated that the environmental goods and services sector stood in 2006 at £25billion with around 400,000 employees; this is projected to grow to £46billion by 2015 ("Emerging markets in environmental industries sector", UK SEED for the Department of Trade and Industry, 2006). The Government has indicated that reaching a 15 per cent renewable energy target by 2050 will require investment in the order of £100billion.

There is no accurate information available for the current extent of the environmental goods and services sector in York nor any easily available definition of what constitutes a green job.

This Taskforce recommends that:

Research is undertaken, in association with Higher Education Institutions and others (public and private) to estimate the current extent of green jobs in the City and project the likely increase over the next 10 years. A significant aspect of this research will include an examination of the types of skills that will be required over the next 10 years across York's green sector and the capacity of local training provision to meet those likely future requirements. The Taskforce group or a subset will set the brief and the timetable for output delivery. Best practice from elsewhere will be investigated as will the context set by Yorkshire Forward, but the outputs from the research will be York specific.

WHAT ACTIONS CAN BE TAKEN TO DEVELOP A LOW CARBON ECONOMY IN YORK?

Whilst the fiscal and regulatory framework for the development of low carbon economies is set by Government, there are opportunities for practical action to be taken at a local level within the obligations set by government and the City Council's signing of the Nottingham Declaration. Many initiatives are already underway and provide a firm foundation for further action. The Taskforce has also considered the

scope for exemplar showcase projects that would clearly demonstrate the ambition of the City to enhance its prosperity through developing a low carbon economy.

The Council, working with partners and other authorities, has a number of levers to help ensure that a low carbon economy develops and indeed thrives in York, through stimulating demand and improving the capacity of the public sector, businesses and individuals to respond to the demand for low carbon goods and services. Through these actions, the conditions will be set to encourage the creation of green jobs in the city.

The LGA report highlights five strands for action. The taskforce has examined each of these to assess current activity and suggest further action.

1. Promoting low carbon development and energy planning in economic development and major regeneration programmes:

What are we doing already -

- The City of York Draft Local Plan policy GP4a and associated supplementary planning policy guidance (Interim Planning Statement Sustainable Design and Construction 2007) currently ensure that all new residential and non residential developments built in the city meet high sustainable design and construction standards, reduce carbon emissions, and where feasible, generate onsite renewable energy.
- The City of York Council produces development briefs for large scale development sites such as Derwenthorpe, Germany Beck, Castle Piccadilly, Nestle South and Terry's. Such briefs address the issues of climate change by stating their requirements to reduce the ecological footprint of new development and by requiring a Sustainability Statement that meets all of the requirements under City of York Draft Local Plan, policy GP4a and associated supplementary planning policy guidance (Interim Planning Statement Sustainable Design and Construction 2007).
- City of York Council is commissioning a renewable energy feasibility study for York highlighting the potential for generating energy from renewable sources in the city. Such a study is vital in guiding York towards low carbon businesses and ultimately a low carbon economy

What can we recommend for further action -

- ***City of York Council to create a renewable energy feasibility study for York highlighting the potential for local renewable energy infrastructure and local energy distribution networks. This work will also review the current Interim Planning Statement Sustainable Design and Construction 2007 and will recommend the creation of a Supplementary Planning Guidance document (to accompany the LDF's Core Strategy (when adopted)). This new guidance will ensure the city sets ambitious yet achievable targets that will create low carbon developments across York's new development sites. The British Sugar site, in particular, provides a major opportunity and an application for grant assistance***

has already been placed with the Department for Communities and Local Government.

- ***Work with the construction industry locally to raise awareness and build upon initiatives such as the Construction Skills Academy developed as part of the University of York's expansion at Heslington East. In addition, seek to develop an accreditation scheme with the industry designed to be of particular benefit to local residents. Actions need to be co-ordinated with the legislative requirements relating to sustainability already in place within the construction sector, notably in developing future skills and training needs. Work in partnership with Job Centre Plus will also identify opportunities both for individuals and skills needs in the round (an approach which can be expanded into other sectors skills needs).***
- ***Work with local business to help deliver the challenging local targets for renewable energy through the Without Walls Partnership including key partners such as the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre for North Yorkshire and Humber and the Energy Partnership to promote low carbon development, support its development and raise the profile of support agencies and packages (including training) offered across York. In addition, to promote awareness, it is recommended that a series of presentations are put in place from Autumn 2009 onwards as a major step in encouraging the development of a low carbon economy in York. A York and North Yorkshire Sub Regional Green Business Club is being established which will provide advice on energy saving and grant support to York businesses and employees. Also Business Link advisors are currently being upskilled to allow them to fully engage with the "green" agenda.***

2. Exercising a powerful leadership and demonstration effect within the City Council by developing and re-shaping services, buildings and facilities and organisational behaviour to become low carbon and resilient to climate change:

What are we doing already -

- The City of York Interim planning statement on Sustainable Design and Construction approved in November 2007 ensures that all new residential and non residential developments built in the city meet high sustainable design and construction standards and where feasible generate onsite renewable energy.
- The council is also leading the way and ensuring that its new buildings are designed to the highest environmental standards such as the eco-depot with its wind turbine and roof mounted solar hot water panels. The new headquarters for the council will also be designed to the excellent sustainable standards and will generate at least 20% of the buildings energy needs from onsite renewable energy.

- The council has set a 25% reduction in carbon emissions by 2013 from its office and schools estate and transport fleet.
- The City of York Council and Partners are also leading the way by ensuring that new leisure facilities and primary and secondary school buildings are designed to the highest environmental standards such as Yearsley swimming pool or Joseph Rowntree School. Other organisations such as St Nicholas Fields are also leading the way in sustainable building design and operation with recycling, composting, rain water harvesting and a wind turbine on site.
- The City of York Council and the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre promote the advice on energy efficiency improvements, grants and renewable energy across the city to businesses through the Business Link Yorkshire and Carbon Trust.
- The city also has a draft Climate Change Framework highlighting the actions the city must take to tackle climate change. (*currently in draft format with Leaders of the Council and LSP).

What can we recommend for further action –

- ***Through the emerging Local Development Framework and the Core Strategy review and set ambitious sustainable design and construction targets including carbon emission reduction targets for all new residential and non residential developments (including leisure facilities, schools and refurbishments and conversions).***
- ***Develop a city wide programme to accelerate energy efficiency and renewable energy in York businesses and organisations through additional financial incentives and expanding and developing current programmes run by the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre, Energy Partnership, City of York Council and the Environment Partnership. This will include the Green Business Club already mentioned.***
- ***City of York in partnership with Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre, and the Without Walls Partnership promote and share best practice on sustainable design in York.***
- ***Through the emerging Local Development Framework look to create sustainable communities in all major new development sites including York North West and British Sugar Site already highlighted.***
- ***City of York Council to lead by example and continue to develop and reshape the council's services, facilities and behaviour to become a low carbon, resilient to climate change, council. Work to be undertaken with the Council's senior managers, members and its planning and related staff to ensure that the green job creation benefits of their work and decision taking is fully appreciated and that the green agenda is everyone's responsibility.***

- **Encourage Science City York to become more directly involved in recognising and encouraging innovation in existing established firms in the city including the annual “Venturefest” event as a mechanism for this.**
- **Support the Science City York aim to develop York as a world class Centre of Excellence in Biorenewable research, education and commercialisation. Monitor the progress of the Science City York/British Coal initiative at North Selby mine which seeks to develop a world class Biorenewables Research and Commercial centre including demonstrator environmental science projects. (subject to the planning process)**

3. Shaping innovation and markets through procurement and influence over supply chains:

What are we doing already –

- Sustainable procurement policies are in place within the City of York Council.

What can we recommend for further action -

- **Need to review existing sustainable procurement policies:**

Led by the City Council (involving its procurement team) the Without Walls Partnership to develop and accelerate coordinated programmes to promote sustainable procurement and the uptake of sustainable goods and services across the city and within the Without Walls Partnership. This activity would build on the procurement sessions already held by the City Council earlier this year.

City of York Council to review current Sustainable Procurement Policy and to reduce CO2 emissions associated with goods and services purchased by the council. The Council has a major role to play as a community leader in this respect. Further engagement in relation to the green agenda will be taken up with the procurement team with a view to taking into account the number and quality of green jobs created.

4. Working with employers and employment and skills providers to ensure that skills gaps are identified and new training opportunities provided.

What are we doing already -

- From April 2008 to March 2009 the City of York Council in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust advice centre for North Yorkshire and Humber provided verbal energy advice to over 2900 residents of York (49 residents received advice on renewable energy, 933 on smarter driving advice, 976 on various energy efficiency grants and 29 on solid wall insulation). An additional 4257 residents also completed an Energy Saving Trust Home Energy Check and received a free personalised report on saving energy in their home.

- A variety of grants available to residents in York through the Energy Saving Trust advice centre for North Yorkshire and Humber and the Energy Partnership. From April 2008 to March 2009 185 energy efficiency grants were issued to residents across York to improve energy efficiency in homes.
- The North Yorkshire Sub Regional Green Business Club is also being established to provide advice on energy saving and grant support to businesses and employees across York.

What can we recommend for further action –

Part of the research, as mentioned previously, in association with Higher Education Institutions and others will be to estimate the current extent of green jobs in the City and project the likely increase over the next 10 years, the research should also include looking at the types of skills that will be required across York's green sector to support this growth.

- ***Promoting local employment and training/construction skills through the provision of training initiatives which meet needs emerging through the work of the Energy Advice Centre and others, and produce a skilled workforce for the future.***
- ***Develop a city wide programme to accelerate energy efficiency and renewable energy in our homes through additional financial incentives or expanding and developing current programmes and grants run by the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre, Energy Partnership, City of York Council and the Environment Partnership of the Without Walls Partnership. Investigate whether any grants might be available to underpin any training deficiencies.***
- ***Specifically consider the skills required in insulating "hard to treat" homes and gauge how best to develop a local initiative to tackle these with a focus on the specialist skills requirements identified in the research.***
- ***Science City York to engage with a range of education partners for the delivery of education activities around Biorenewables.***

5. Identifying and supporting innovation:

What are we doing already -

- International reputation of Higher education – University Green Chemistry/Centre for Novel Agricultural Products/Science City York role in bioscience and supporting the development and exploitation of new technologies for a sustainable future.
- Science City York to undertake a strategic assessment of York's Bioscience sector.

What can we recommend for further action -

- ***Support the Science City York aim to develop York as a world class Centre of Excellence in Biorenewable research, education and commercialisation which will result in a wide selection of jobs across the employment spectrum.***

DELIVERY

The Taskforce recognises the need for further consultation on the recommendations set out in this report and would suggest that this is undertaken primarily through the Without Walls Local Strategic Partnership and its constituent thematic partnerships. The consultation should include the opportunity to identify further actions to develop a low carbon economy in York and the ongoing research proposed should be built into this.

Following this, an action plan should be prepared to implement those recommendations that the Council and the Without Walls LSP consider most appropriate to undertake. This action plan will need to set out lead bodies, resource implications, targets, milestones and measures of performance for each action, with regular reporting to both the council and the Without Walls Local Strategic Partnership. This work should also feed into the climate change framework and future action plan, playing a vital role in the creation of low carbon communities across York. It is recognised that climate change cannot be achieved without essential wider dialogue with the whole community.

The Taskforce is willing to remain in place to oversee action plans and monitor progress and its membership will be reviewed on a regular basis.