

Aberdeenshire Council: Carbon Budget

OVERVIEW

Aberdeenshire Council has a [target](#) to reduce the council’s own emissions by 75% by 2030 and to work with others across the region to ensure that Aberdeenshire reaches Net Zero by 2045 (from the 2010/11 baseline year). In order to drive necessary climate action, Aberdeenshire Council has employed numerous strategies, including its ‘Carbon Budget’. This aims to balance the importance of its carbon footprint with that of its financial budgets.

THE CARBON BUDGET

In 2016, Aberdeenshire Council started to develop its ‘[Carbon Budget](#)’ and released it the following year set for 2017/2018. The council was a real climate leader at that time, being the first Scottish local authority to utilise a carbon budget process. The ‘Carbon Budget’ is set annually and is determined utilising the required [linear reduction](#) to 75% from the 2010/11 baseline year. See previous years’ ‘Carbon Budgets’ [here](#).

Overall, the ‘Carbon Budget’ process enables Aberdeenshire Council to;

- ▶ Identify actions needed to meet emissions reductions
- ▶ Reduce the Council’s own carbon emissions
- ▶ Allocate annual reduction target to each Director
- ▶ Report and monitor progress against its climate targets using a 2010/2011 baseline year to the Sustainability Committee and relevant Policy Committees

THE PROCESS

The ‘Carbon Budget’ concept has been to allocate a reduction requirement of tonnes Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (tCO2e) annually for the organisation’s operational emissions. The annual reduction requirement for Aberdeenshire Council is estimated at 3250 tCO2e each year. This figure does not take into consideration any decarbonisation of the grid.

The process is embedded across Directorates, which are all required to work towards meeting emission reduction targets. This has required ongoing meaningful engagement with senior leadership and Members as well as the officers across the services who can influence necessary change and lead on projects.

Directors and ‘Carbon Budget’ leads from each Directorate are provided guidance for identifying and inputting projects into a template with the necessary detail for the annual ‘Carbon Budget’ report (see table 1 below). The Team Leader (Sustainability and Climate Change) then collates all responses and pulls together the final report for Aberdeenshire Council Members to approve at the Budget setting meeting. The ‘Carbon Budget’ also goes through the Council’s integrated impact assessment that assesses any impact the report may have on Climate Change and Sustainability, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty, Health inequalities, and the Town Centre's First principles.

Project Name	Asset Name	Consumption Savings	Capital Expenditure of Project	Annual Cost Savings	Budget	Budget Line
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Figure 1: Headings of Aberdeenshire Council’s ‘Carbon Budget’ Template

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MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Every 6 months, Aberdeenshire Council's Team Leader (Sustainability and Climate Change) provides an update on the 'Carbon Budget' to the council's Sustainability Committee. For the past 4 years, a 6-monthly update on the progress of Directorates has also gone to the relevant Policy Committees. This allows for additional input and scrutiny from elected member representatives on each of these 4 policy committees. Further scrutiny is received from Aberdeenshire Council's Internal Audit Service. See the most recent audit [here](#).

IMPACTS

Following the introduction of the 'Carbon Budget', the Council has formalised a process on guidance and training of the Risk Register, a 'Carbon Budget Toolkit', has 'Carbon Budget Leads' and addresses insetting. The 'Carbon Budget' has also aided the completion of SSN's 'Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Reporting', identified projects beyond fleet and buildings, increased transparency and evidenced spend.

Further positive impacts include greater engagement and embedding of climate change into service areas as well as an increase in the amount of information collected by service areas. Aberdeenshire Council has also witnessed a rise in enquiries from other local authorities interested in implementing something similar. Therefore, greater collaboration and knowledge sharing has happened as a result.

CHALLENGES

Aberdeenshire Council have encountered numerous challenges when developing and implementing the 'Carbon Budget'. These include:

- ▶ A lack of resources and general capability and capacity across services although this has improved each year that the 'Carbon Budget' process has continued.
- ▶ Not enough clear ownership of required carbon savings by Directorates to ensure the targets for 2030 and 2045 can be met.
- ▶ Determining future years interventions to the required level, including planned impact, costing and resourcing is also a challenge.
- ▶ Use and maintenance of the 'Carbon Budget Toolkit' due to its size and additional learning requirements on top of existing systems. It is also not perfect, especially with regards to the cost abatement generation.
- ▶ The 'Carbon Budget' can be perceived as something that removes resources away from other workstreams. More work is needed to link the interconnection and co-benefits offered by climate action.
- ▶ Working with consultants requires additional resource and capacity. That said, their technical support proved valuable in building trust in the plan and toolkit.
- ▶ Engaging across council-wide Services
- ▶ Quantitative data collection and analysis
- ▶ Changes in emission factors
- ▶ Building into MTFS and business planning

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

To learn more about Aberdeenshire Council's 'Carbon Budgets', please get in touch with Aberdeenshire Council's Team Leader (Sustainability and Climate Change) at sustainability@aberdeenshire.gov.uk