



# Community Planning Aberdeen

<b>Progress Report</b>	Project End Report: 13.1 Reduce public sector carbon emissions by at least 7% by 2023
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<b>Governance Group</b>	CPA Board – 29 February 2024

## PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim which aimed to 13.1 Reduce public sector carbon emissions by at least 7% by 2023 and note that a revised aim is being considered as part of the refresh of the LOIP.

## SUMMARY OF KEY INFORMATION

### 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The public sector must respond to a range of drivers on climate change, including meeting statutory climate duties. As a result a range of energy and climate initiatives are taking place within city public sector organisations. These reflect the scope of influence of organisations and are often focused on policies, plans, projects for the organisations operations/ assets. This project aims to empower staff in public sector organisations to contribute to, help co-design and deliver climate actions.
- 1.2. Green Champions are a volunteer led staff schemes, which can identify areas of improvement, drive change towards sustainable and resource efficient behaviour. These can have the potential for cost and carbon efficiencies. Champions can help to instigate change, provide education and create a platform of a sustainable culture and practice through engagement, enthusiasm, passion and motivation.
- 1.3. The Green Champions project was initially developed and tested by staff in Aberdeen City Council initiated by “Green Pioneers”. Learning was then shared with others in the city interested in establishing Green Champions in their own organisation.
- 1.4. Green Champions can help improve staff understanding of why there is a need to reduce carbon emissions, support behaviour change and help implement measures that can help contribute towards the improvement aim. However, it should be noted that Green Champions initiatives alone are not sufficient to meet the improvement project aim and carbon reduction target. Green Champions need to be part of a wider programme of public sector action to deliver the sufficient scale of carbon savings.
- 1.5. This project charter is also relevant to the related LOIP Improvement Project Aims:
  - **SO 13:** Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate
  - **SO 14:** Increase sustainable travel: 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026
  - **SO 15:** Addressing the nature crisis by protecting/ managing 26% of Aberdeen's area for nature by 2026

- Opportunities for Green Champions may arise that can be linked to partnership working with other LOIP aims through change ideas initiated by themselves.

## 2. IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

- 2.1. Against this background, on 4/12/2020 the CPA Board approved the [project charter](#) for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to reduce public sector carbon emissions by at least 7% by 2023.
- 2.2. The development of Green Champions aligns with:
  - UN Sustainable Development Goal on [Climate Action](#) - 13.3.
  - The delivery of organisation carbon reduction plans, such as the Aberdeen City [Council Climate Change Plan](#), sets net zero targets and actions for Council assets and operations.
  - A reduction in public sector emissions can also make a contribution to city net zero targets, including the delivery of [Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap](#) and enabling strategies (including the [Empowerment Strategy](#)), supporting the delivery of stretch outcome 13 and the wider net zero transition in Aberdeen.

## 3. WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?

- 3.1. The project tested the following change ideas:

1. **Build a city public sector staff Green Champion's network to help contribute towards 7% reduction target of carbon emissions by 2023, through carbon reduction actions and encouraging change.**

- Green Champions were initially set up in the Council, encouraging volunteers from staff throughout the organisation. Council staff then developed and tested a number of initiatives.
- Once Council Green Champions were established, the project reached out and connected with Champion Networks in other organisations and those who were interested in setting their own Green Champion schemes, with the purpose of networking into a city wide or "partner network."
- Representatives from different organisations agreed to meet quarterly to allow new and developing Green Champion groups to learn from one another and opportunities to learn, support, collaborate with different networks.

2. **Establish and build network online to enable information sharing, collaboration and building peer to peer connections throughout the organisation as well as out with the organisation.**

- TEAMS and face to face events were used for information sharing and collaboration with the Network.

3. **Plan, test, implement and develop a low/no budget, easy to implement programme of carbon reduction initiatives, led by the volunteer Green Champions network.**

- Testing was carried out within the Council's own Green Champions network and involved activities such as the use of gamification in short and long-term scenarios, determining if there were usable behaviour change/carbon reduction calculations that could help calculate carbon savings. Activities were targeted around themed/awareness raising dates such as Scotland's annual Climate Week. This utilised resources from Net Zero Scotland and also allowed activities to run using methodologies like gamification to encourage up take and prizes to give incentives.

4. **Through Green Champions develop a staff led awareness programme to support behaviour change, disseminate information, build staff understanding on carbon reduction and encourage action on climate change. Test staff led methods, information and messages to empower wider staff to contribute.**

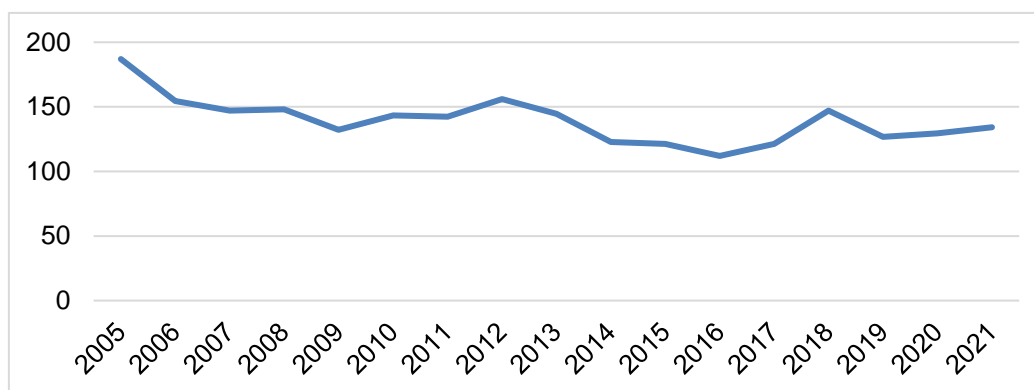
- A Council intranet space was created for sustainable, climate, environment themed articles, information, resources for staff and Green Champions to help communicate, share and learn information towards the project aim.
- Theme based workshops were held for Green Champions to learn about sustainable themes; public climate duties and reporting; actions and initiatives that would contribute towards climate, sustainability, carbon reduction. The workshops provided learning opportunities and CPD, as well as activities for Champions to get involved in and they were accessible to the wider partner network. Workshop topics included Biodiversity Reporting, Council Climate Change Plan, Repair what you Wear, Reusable Period Products and outline of a sustainability tool.

#### 4. HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

4.1 Yes, the aim has been achieved, with a 8.7% reduction in public sector emissions 2018-2021<sup>1</sup>, however the direct contribution from Green Champions to the public sector emissions target has been difficult to quantify and it is acknowledged that most reductions will relate to wider public sector actions.

It should also be noted there are fluctuations in data year on year, as shown in *Figure 1* due to factors including changes in UK methodology and, within the improvement project timeframe, reductions from pandemic restrictions.

*Figure 1: Public sector CO2 emissions Aberdeen (2005-2021) Kt CO2<sup>1</sup>*



4.2 Public sector emissions represent 10% of the total CO2 emissions for Aberdeen.

4.3 The project has successfully established numbers of Green Champions, a Green Champions network and a range of awareness raising and carbon reduction initiatives which have had benefits and co-benefits in contributing to a sustainable city. However, there were challenges in obtaining data on carbon savings as a direct result of Green Champion initiatives. This was either difficult to calculate or it was not possible to collect and/ or share data.

4.4 The change ideas tested have had a positive impact as detailed below:

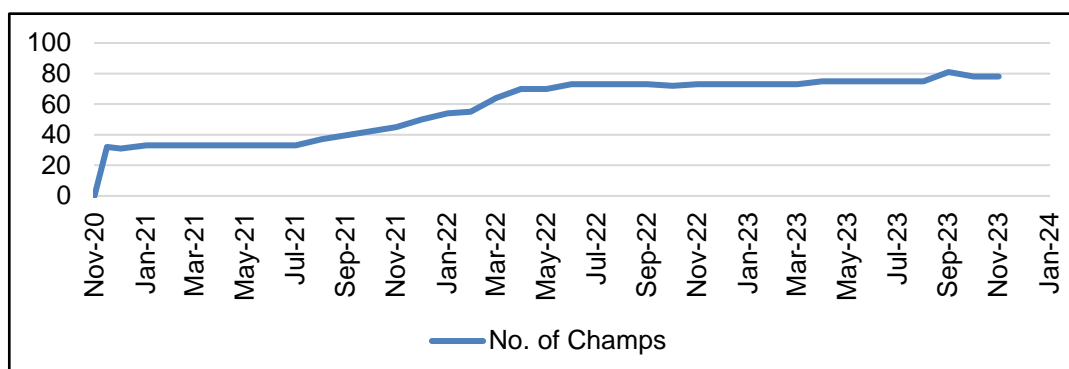
##### **Number of public sector workforce ambassadors of low carbon living and working (number of Green Champions signed up)**

- Through networking and building connections with external organisations, the wider Green Champions Network now includes 10 organisations, 7 of which are based in the city, providing an opportunity to share and learn. This is a growing network, with a number of organisations still in the initial stages of implementing a champion network in their own organisation.
- Since the Improvement Charter established, 78 public sector Green Champions are now in place in Aberdeen, with the target of 50 by 2023 exceeded (*Table 1 and Figure 1*). The numbers of Green Champions joining the network illustrates a desire to make carbon reduction changes in work and home living.

Table 1: Green Champion targets, with actual numbers

Baseline 2020	Target 2021	Target 2022	Target 2023	Actual 2023
0	13	26	50	78

Figure 1: Breakdown of numbers of Green Champions



#### 4.5 Number of staff carbon reduction initiatives

- Activities were tested in the Council using Plan Do Study Act during the testing phases. 12 tests were carried out. This was based on testing out gamification activities, learning how to collect and collate carbon reduction data and type of activities that could be used.
- The Council hosted two awareness raising programmes for Climate Week (established by [Net Zero Nation](#), in September 2021, 2022). A series of activities included using gamification to encourage uptake for individuals and clusters. Workshops, articles and actions were also completed.
- As an engagement activity for North East Climate Week in March, gamification and incentives were used to encourage staff uptake of the Council Climate duties E-Learn module.
- Four workshops were provided for learning opportunities and engaging in uptake of action-based activities. The workshops included Q&A sessions and ideas to run groups, activities and campaigns to encourage staff volunteering and support. The workshops were available to all Green Champions with attendance also open to partner networks (Table 2).
- 16 staff led initiatives involved activities ranging from clothing collections for refugees, Herbal tea making workshops, tour of the Council nurseries and litter picking (Table 2). Day to day actions of food waste volunteers, the distribution of reusable period products and workplace growing have not been measured in this project due to challenges in obtaining data.

#### 4.6 Number of people taking part in environment and sustainability educational activities (wider engagement)

Table 2: Activities of Green Champions in the Council and attendance

Activity	Engagement (attendance) <sup>21</sup>	Included city wide partners
<b>2023</b>		
Repair what you wear	20	Yes
Repair clothing-in person	5	
E-learn (Council)	100	
Reusable period products	20	Yes
<b>2022</b>		

Seed social (growing)	13	Yes
Workplace growing	21	Yes
Think Great Tool	6	
Step Challenge x 2 events	13	Yes
Clothing appeal	5	Yes
Litter pick	4	
Tea making	6	
Love to Ride x 2 events	6	Yes
<b>2021</b>		
Biodiversity	10	Yes
Climate Week	75	

4.7 As detailed above, wider engagement monitoring and data collection was challenging due to:

- Infancy of developing network.
- Emission data for Green Champion activities was not available, not recorded and/or not collected.
- Diversity in the approach to the Green Champion role from one organisation to another.

4.8 Connecting and collaborating with external organisations and or Council teams to learn and support active projects included:

- Council Environmental Services; Workplace Growing Improvement Charter.
- Council Waste and Recycling; Reusable Period Products Improvement Charter
- Repair What you Wear.
- Council, Museums and Galleries and Countryside Rangers; passed on wooden crates to upcycle for community growing projects i.e. Crates to Plates.
- Libraries supported a lending library and Green Libraries week (October 2023) to encourage Wear and Repair and Grow your Own.
- Rosemount Community Centre and Ukraine Refugee Winter Appeal.

#### 4.9 Impact of initiatives<sup>3</sup>

4.10 Despite the challenges re data collation on reduction of emissions, below is a list of emissions saved from participation in these specific initiatives:

- Love to Ride Challenge: 620 miles cycled, 180.7kg CO<sub>2</sub>e saved.
- Step Challenge: 2022.87 miles walked, an estimated 567.46 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e saved.
- Food waste champions to encourage food waste to be composted in a Council office building
- To support Ukraine Winter Clothing donations 145.5kg of clothing and blankets were collected, 22.1kg CO<sub>2</sub>e saved from reuse or 64.7kg CO<sub>2</sub>e saved from landfill.
- Increased Awareness for Reusable Period Products and volunteers to help distribute in the work place.
- 6 bags of rubbish collected, 16.06kg CO<sub>2</sub>e saved following completion of a litter pick.

Increased awareness through promotion and informing colleagues of E-Learns, Climate Change Plans, and actions to help improve and or make sustainable change.

#### 4.11 Communication measures

- Development of an internal web-based platform to host information, publish articles, collate and share information, resources, policies etc for within the council was set up in 2020. This resource provided an easy to access location to share and

communicate information for Green Champions. Unfortunately, this information cannot be shared to the wider city partner network.

- Communication for the partner network was by email only, direct conversations or the quarterly meetings.
- Analytics for the internal web-based platform is only available in the last 90-day increment, viewing figures measured in the last 90 days was 368<sup>4</sup> views.
- Yammer is another council platform for social communication used in the Council; this was only available to Council staff only. The 'Green Workplace' Yammer page, has 213 users to share Green Champion information and run challenges and competitions from. This platform is an opportunity for champions and staff to communicate with one another. Partner networks could not access or view posts.
- Workshops were implemented to build on knowledge and understanding for staff as well as informing of any projects, activities, resources, plans etc to share with Green Champions (see table above for attendance figures). Meetings were hosted online to ensure a wider range of audience. This also allowed partner networks to join in and learn from the workshops.

## **5. HOW HAVE OUR COMMUNITIES/PROTECTED GROUPS PARTICIPATED IN THE PROJECT AND THE IMPACT OF THIS**

5.1 Green Champions have successfully engaged and grown within the Council, a number of city organisations and beyond. Champions have been able to communicate and engage within their teams, and organisations in the community. Building on and supporting established projects and networks will help reach out into the community as demonstrated through:

- Working with and contributing to other Charters and Community Planning Partners such as Workplace growing, Reusable Period Products, Active Travel activities etc.
- Networking with community groups, Repair What you Wear, Countryside Rangers and Green Champion connections in the community to build on opportunities.

## **6. HOW WILL WE MONITOR AND SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?**

6.1 Through continued engagement to extend and mature the Green Champion Network and encourage further sustainable and carbon reduction behaviour change:

- Building the wider Green Champion's network, through regular meetings and planning and delivering a low/no budget, easy to implement programme of carbon reduction initiatives.
- Sharing information on learning, experiences, actions, exploring creative ideas, challenges and projects with the Green Champions Network, to help sustain and inform improvements.
- Developing and enabling staff led awareness programme to support behaviour change, disseminate information, build staff understanding on carbon reduction and encourage action on climate change and empower wider staff to contribute.

6.2 Monitoring will focus on obtainable, measurable data, as indicated in the charter process measures. It is proposed that a further aim on reducing public sector emissions be included with the refreshed LOIP and subject to approval data will continue to be reported via that project. Data will also continue to be reported through the Sustainable City Group and on the Outcomes Framework.

## **7. OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD**

7.1 Continue to encourage and support new Green Champions into the city network, strengthening relationships through community groups and partnerships, as well as increasing opportunities for shared learning.

- 7.2 There is an opportunity for Community Planning to encourage opportunities through Green Champion Networks beyond the public sector, in support of stretch outcome 13. This could include champions from the community and business sector and incorporate action towards Corporate Social Responsibility, Net Zero and Sustainable Development Goals.
- 7.3 Opportunity for other LOIP projects to consider whether Champion networks could support achievement of their aims via empowering staff and communities to lead/take forward improvement in areas of interest to them.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

- i) Agree that the aim has been provisionally achieved with a 8.7% reduction in public sector emissions against 2018 data, however noting this is purely reflective of data within the project period and cannot be directly attributable to this project alone. In light of this, the Sustainable City Group was considering a revised aim focused on a further reduction in public sector emissions as part of the refresh of the LOIP.
- ii) Note that a revised aim would look to scale up and spread as detailed at section 7, however also look at new innovative ways to reduce public sector emissions that have not previously been tested; and
- iii) Note that the data set for the overall aim and green champions will continue to be reported via the outcomes framework to ensure progress is monitored.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

### Key Opportunities

- Link to wider groups, projects and initiatives in progress i.e. Step challenge.
- Encourage more staff led direction, suggestions and actions.
- Build on learning opportunities and workshops for champions.
- Improve information sharing. There is a desire to have more structured and set programmes from the Council Green Champions and to use programmes to set a timetable for the year ahead. Improve monitoring of actions and activity. There are a lot of actions carried out by Green Champions, which were not recorded through this project.

### Risk and Barriers

- Limited time and availability of Green Champion volunteers.
- Inconsistent communication and engagement from Green Champions.
- Lack of feedback and independent action from Green Champions.
- Numbers of volunteers may vary due to job changes, progression, workloads etc.
- Challenges with emissions data calculation, gathering and monitoring – Green Champions.
- Champions and staff not aware of all the communication streams and resources.
- Keeping the network fresh and consistent over time. Green Champion roles are perceived differently by different organisations and may have different goals, aims and requirements.

## CONSULTATION

- Sustainable City Outcome Improvement Group
- Green Champions wider Network representatives
- Alison Leslie, Team Lead - Climate & Sustainability Policy, Aberdeen City Council
- Sandy Gustar, Senior Sustainability Officer, Aberdeen City Council

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Green Champions Charter
- Local Outcome Improvement Plan

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<sup>1</sup> UK Local Authority Greenhouse Gas emission estimates (2005-2021). CO2 data set. Public sector emissions have been introduced more recently to annual reporting. Whole data series are revised annually where necessary to take on board changes to methodology, guidelines and new data.

<sup>2</sup>Green Champions may have represented their team or collected on behalf of their team i.e. active travel challenges recruited their own colleagues, information received was total figures.

<sup>3</sup>See Table 2 for participation by the wider partner network.

<sup>4</sup>368 Views in the last 90 days. Analytics for the Green Workplace is limited in terms of recorded and accessible information.