

Written response to supplementary question from Councillor Paul Barrow to Councillor Catherine Webber, Cabinet member for Climate Emergency and Environment (Minute reference 133)

“There is no doubt that Covid has depleted the Vale's coffers, as the government's grants have in no way covered the real cost of Covid and our resources have been, rightly, focused on supporting the Covid-19 response and our most vulnerable residents.

However, we have been moving forward at pace and have already worked up a list of prioritised projects to tackle the Climate Emergency, this has included reviewing all of the projects in the original CEAC year one work programme. I was reassured by how many there were already in progress. There are some projects that were included in the CEAC year one work programme that were budgeted for that have been delayed in starting, largely because of Covid-19 resource pressures, so they will come forward into next year with the new Corporate Plan projects.

Officers have looked at our Corporate Plan projects on tackling the Climate Emergency and we have worked together to prioritise some for delivery next year. They have been prioritised around deliverability, carbon savings achieved and co-benefits. These are now being discussed by SMT in the light of our next budget. Of course, we are hoping to work with those wonderful volunteer groups who give their time and energy to help tackle the Climate Emergency, such as the Carbon Cutters.

We also plan to take forward projects within the Corporate Plan around biodiversity and nature recovery as part of the Vale tackling the Climate Emergency and I wish to take the opportunity to signpost to the Guide to Planting Trees for Community Groups which has been produced and is available on the Council's web site. There will be more work to come and officers and members are working to balance which projects will have the most impact on carbon savings and in which year projects can be delivered. One of the things we are looking to do is develop a Biodiversity Steering Group, involving both key officers and members to oversee and develop the Council's approach to biodiversity and nature's recovery.

However, be in no doubt that we will be pushing hard to get the right support and funding and pushing to deliver our priorities and meet our targets for the Climate Emergency”.