

4 headline responses to Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy

CVPC intends to make a detailed response to the 8 topics in the DC Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy (draft here). But we list four headline responses to the strategy as a whole here:

1. In common with Dorset Climate Action Network and many other respondents, **we strongly believe the Zero Carbon target date for Dorset Council should be brought forward to 2030**. DC's own strategy document acknowledges that "we have only 8-10 years at the current rate, within which serious action is required to avert this crisis and avoid the worst impacts". Dorset Council should respect its own advice and demonstrate the seriousness of its commitment by setting the target date as 2030.
2. The Ecological Emergency seems to have been added as an afterthought. Although it's mentioned in paragraph 1 of the Foreword, by paragraph 2 we read that the Panel's job is to "make recommendations to Dorset Council's Cabinet on actions that will help mitigate against climate change." No mention here of the ecological emergency. **The ecological emergency and associated critical loss of wildlife and biodiversity needs to be given equal status with carbon reduction throughout the report.**
3. As the pandemic and events in the USA have shown, it's not only flooding and hot summers that we need to worry about. Many commentators see the clear danger of the breakdown of some social, economic and political structures in the next 20 years. This could be provoked or exacerbated by disease; mass migration; food/water wars in other regions; appeals to direct action by populist politicians; worldwide food shortages; cyber threats to communications networks; the collapse of stock markets as governments struggle to repay debts incurred in pandemic bailouts. To be ready, **we need adaptation as well as moves to mitigate climate change**. Initiatives to strengthen local communities and their food, transport, health and other resources are a vital part of adaptation and, in the unlikely event that they are not needed in an emergency, will combine to make Dorset's towns and villages even better places to live.
4. The strategy divides potential action by DC into 'Direct', 'Indirect' and 'Influence and Partnership'. 'Influence and Partnership' grossly understates Dorset Council's most important potential role. Just in and around our own parish there are initiatives to clean up the river, to create pesticide free wildlife corridors across the landscape and to create an agroecology training centre. Many leading experts on the science of organic farming, climate change and housing, for example, live locally. In neighbouring Bridport there are multiple initiatives on local food, cooperative housing and tree planting. Dorset's communities are already acting and **DC needs to think beyond partnering to championing these initiatives and expertise**. DC can, with relatively little money, champion ideas like:
 - the local-food-based 'Dorset Diet'
 - 'Dorset Lifelines' - pesticide free corridors across the whole county
 - 'Regenerative Dorset': a county-wide drive to create a circular local economy that extends product use then recovers and regenerates products and materials at the end of each service life
 - the 'Dorset Doughnut' (mapping areas where Dorset has overextended itself and finding ways to become the first county in the UK to live within sustainable boundaries).

By championing these ideas and others that are already underway, DC can get major publicity for Dorset as the most progressive county in England - creating a blueprint that others can follow and harnessing the energy, knowledge and skills of residents to make climate and ecological action a part of everyday life for all of us.