

# Dorset CAN

## Dorset Climate Action Network and supporters

### Response to Dorset Council's Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy & Action Plan

#### Introduction and summary

The global community, and the world's natural systems, face an existential threat, because of global warming, climate change, destruction of natural habitats, extinction of species and gross abuse of natural resources. This threat is caused by human action. It can only be lifted by radical change in human action.

**Leadership.** In November 2021, the world's nations will come together at the global conference COP26, hosted in Glasgow by the UK government. That meeting will re-set the agenda, and the targets, for action by governments and peoples throughout the world. Leadership lies with governments, but also with local authorities, enterprises, societies and other organisations, and with the people themselves.

**Partnership within the county.** We salute Dorset Council for taking the lead by preparing this Strategy, and for its recognition that the 'massive task' of contributing locally to the global campaign must be addressed by partnership between the Council itself and the organisations, enterprises, communities and citizens of the county. We are fully ready to play our part in that partnership.

**Urgency and scope.** We believe that the target date for achieving net zero carbon emissions, for both the Council and the County's community, must be brought forward to 2030, to meet the hard truth that this is indeed an emergency. We wish to see equal focus upon climate, ecology and resilience. These imperatives should guide actions across the full scope of the Council's work, and across the relevant activities of all sectors in the county.

**Engagement.** Early and powerful steps must be taken to engage all interests in the county in this urgent campaign. For this purpose, the Council should initiate the shaping, through citizens' assemblies and representative groups, of a **Vision** for the county which will catch the imagination and enlist the energies of all. We offer a first draft of that vision.

#### Vision for Dorset (first draft)

By 2030, Dorset will be widely recognised as a beautiful, clean, sustainable, healthy county which has :

- Won the **Race to Zero** to become the first Zero-Carbon County in the UK, having radically reduced its energy demands and moved wholly to renewable energy supply
- Halted and substantially reversed the loss of wildlife through a **Dorset Lifelines** programme of widespread nature recovery and radical changes in land use and land management, pioneered on Council-owned land and County Farms
- Completed an ambitious **Swim Dorset** programme to make every river and stream in Dorset safe for children to play and swim, and to make the water at every beach safe for residents and tourists alike
- Through a **Regenerative Dorset** programme, transformed its economy to be green, sustainable in use of resources, with a strong dimension of local self-sufficiency (notably in food) and of circular activity including use of local timber in new buildings
- Through a **Clean Dorset** programme, radically reduced its levels of air pollution to well below statutory limits, eliminated all single-use plastic and achieved the highest levels of waste reduction, re-use and recycling in the country
- Through its **Planning for Resilience** programme, achieved high levels of resilience in its communities, focused on high standards of energy efficiency, space and equipment in all housing and on local balance and easy access between houses, jobs and services.

## The collective challenge

1. We congratulate Dorset Council on its determined and sustained approach to the preparation of the Strategy and Action Plan, and on the wide scope and clear structure of these documents. We thank the Council for extending the public consultation period and for clearly taking into account the views expressed during that process. This openness has contributed much to the quality of the proposals and to the likelihood that the communities, enterprises and organisations in Dorset county will effectively 'co-own' this vital Strategy.

**2. A massive collective challenge.** We endorse the Council's view that this climate and ecological emergency poses a massive challenge, which will demand leadership from the Council and widespread action by the people, communities, enterprises and organisations in the county. This is reflected in the width of the Strategy and of the Action Plan items, many of which will depend upon contribution from organisations other than the Council.

**3.Co-ownership by Council and County.** This Strategy will only succeed if it is co-owned by the Dorset Council and the people, communities, enterprises and organisations in the county. Many in the county are already convinced of the need for urgent action, and ready to play their part. The challenge is to bring the whole of the Dorset community to the same conviction, and to enable all to contribute to the great campaign.

**4.Leadership by the Council.** Within this partnership, the Council must provide clear leadership. We understand the distinction that the Council draws between actions which are called 'direct', 'indirect', or open to the 'influence and partnership' of the Council. But we urge the Council to offer vigorous leadership across the whole range of projects and programmes. For many actions described as 'indirect', the Council can provide crucial leadership by using its powers as planning authority, highway authority and other roles. The Council must design all of its strategies and policies, in these and other areas, around the central requirements of addressing climate and ecological targets.

**5.Pressure on central government.** Dorset Council should work with other local authorities and organisations to press the Government to create the legislative and financial framework for action on this Strategy. Striking examples are the need for legislation related to single-use plastic; the sharpening of building regulations to secure carbon negative status for all new building; and the urgently needed detail of the proposed Shared Prosperity Fund.

**6.The Action Plan.** We welcome the Action Plan, including the provisional timing of the action on each item. We applaud the sense of urgency for direct actions on the Council's own buildings, land and activities. More broadly, the Action Plan can be a checklist for leadership by the Council and a menu to which people can respond by volunteering to take or share initiative. Further actions should be added, including those suggested in this response. With such additions, the Action Plan could be an agenda for the Dorset Climate and Ecological Emergency Partnership, and a checklist for the Annual review and Report by the Council.

*In order to help the Council, we structure this response according to the headings used by the Council in its consultation questionnaire. But we go sideways from that structure where needed.*

## Carbon, ecology, resilience and social justice

**7. The Scope of the Strategy.** The Council's Strategy focuses strongly on Climate, and offers targets only in relation to achieving zero carbon. That target is indeed of crucial importance in the face of global warming and the increasingly severe worldwide impact of that trend. But the focus should equally be on the ecological emergency, which has a massive impact on natural systems and on human well-being. We wish to see targets set and vigorously pursued in this field also. Moreover, targets are needed for a third theme, namely the resilience of the County's economy, community and environment in the face of change in the climate, ecosystems and in the global economy. We explain later this

emphasis on resilience. Related to this should a strong emphasis, throughout the radical action under this Strategy, on assuring equality and social justice. The current pandemic has made worse the suffering of many people on low income or facing other disadvantage. We must engage with them and ensure their needs are met. Dorset Council should state clearly its commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Zero carbon target**

**8. Council and County.** The process of achieving zero carbon is shorthand for the drastic action which is needed in order to cut greenhouse gas emissions (not just CO<sub>2</sub>, but also Methane, NO<sub>x</sub> and CFC's) and to capture carbon. In setting targets, the Council has made a broad distinction between itself and the County, setting a target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040 in areas under its direct control and 2050 for other actions in the county. The Strategy does not seek to justify this distinction. We believe the distinction is unnecessary, indeed counter-productive because it implies that communities and organisations other than the Council may operate with less urgency. The whole Dorset community should embrace a high sense of urgency in the face of this global crisis.

**9. What targets ?** Dorset Council half-recognises this urgency in its statement "We have only 8-10 years at the current rate (of carbon emissions), within which serious action is required to avert this crisis and avoid the worst impacts". But it has chosen 2040 as the target date for itself, and 2050 for other organisations in the county. Over 300 local authorities have declared climate emergencies. Two-thirds of these have set the target of achieving Zero carbon emissions by 2050, the date that was set at the Paris Climate Summit of 2015 and which was adopted by the UK government in June 2019. Other local authorities have set targets with a greater sense of urgency, aiming at net zero emissions by 2030 (for example Cornwall and Wiltshire County Councils) or by other dates short of 2050.

**10. Greater urgency is needed.** We believe that the Council, and the County, should adopt a much more urgent approach. Many governments have failed to keep the commitments that they made at the Paris Summit in 2015. Greenhouse gas emissions, and levels of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, continue to rise. Atmospheric temperatures, and sea level, have also risen significantly. In its latest report, the 'Sixth Carbon Budget' of December 2020, the Committee on Climate Change (the main independent adviser to the UK Government) offered a recommended pathway which "requires a 78% reduction in UK territorial emissions between 1990 and 2035 : in effect, bringing forward the UK's previous 80% target by nearly 15 years". At the recent Climate Ambition Summit, the Prime Minister accepted the logic of that pathway. The next Climate Summit – COP26, to be hosted by the UK government in Glasgow in November 2021 – is almost certain to call for accelerated action, with zero carbon emissions to be achieved much earlier than 2050.

**11.** We have received the following clear advice from the expert organisation Scientists Advising Europe :

"Immediate action needs to be taken now to prevent the planet's natural systems from spiralling out of control as multiple tipping points are reached and passed and to prevent the planet becoming a "Hothouse Earth". The focus for every country and all levels of government should be to reach net zero by 2030. We see this as essential to have a reasonable chance of keeping humanity safe from the danger of a climate that on our current emissions trajectory will soon go out of control."

**12. Target 2030.** We therefore urge Dorset Council to adopt 2030 as the target date for itself and the whole county to achieve Zero Carbon and (as we shall show) to achieve radical changes related to ecology and resilience. The Council might indeed set a target to be the first Zero-Carbon County in the UK, having radically reduced its energy demands and moved wholly to renewable energy supply. We urge the Council to re-think the pace of run-down in greenhouse gas emissions for both their own action and that within the county; and to set a clear carbon budget with annual targets for reductions in emissions. The Sixth Carbon Budget (mentioned above) shows that it is possible to identify the key areas for action, and

to set strong, time-bound targets for reducing emissions. These need to be translated into specific targets for Dorset. Fortunately, as the CCC Report shows, this is likely to be less expensive than previously thought, and to have revenue-saving benefits, especially in the areas of health, energy poverty and reducing unemployment. The Council should identify and focus most urgently on the easy targets for reductions in emissions, bearing in mind that the less easy targets will be slower to achieve. We urge that the campaign to cut emissions should be 'front-loaded', with very rapid progress in the first crucial years.

**13. Sectors for reduction of greenhouse gases.** The strategy records that the current total of greenhouse gas emissions in the county is attributable to the following key sectors - Transport 31% of all emissions; Businesses 27%; Residential 22%; Agriculture 10%; and small amounts from waste management, exports and other sources (note : Aviation is not included). These figures point clearly to the sectors which should be given priority in seeking reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. We highlight them in our text below.

## Energy

**14. Move away from fossil fuels.** Greenhouse gas emissions arise mainly from the direct or indirect use of fossil fuels. The Council and the County should commit themselves to move fully away from that use. This will impact particularly on electricity generation, heating of buildings, transport systems, industrial processes and farming. The Local Plan should make plain the Council's opposition to new or expanded extraction of fossil fuel within the County. This should include opposition to any new exploration or extraction, by fracking or other means, of oil or gas. There should be no expansion of the Wytch Farm project, which is the largest onshore oil field in Europe : plans should be established now for the phasing out of extraction and refinement from this oil field, with due planning for jobs to replace those that will be lost. We support the objection to the proposed oil drilling in Puddletown. The Council's pension plan should divest from fossil fuel investments with immediate effect, in order to set a clear example to other investors in the county.

**15. Renewable energy.** The Council's Strategy makes plain there that this phasing out of fossil fuel must be matched by switching all uses of energy in the county to renewable sources. This will include, for example, heating homes and other buildings through heat pumps or hydrogen; powering transport through electric batteries or hydrogen; and deriving electricity from solar power, wind power or other renewable sources. At present, renewable sources produce about 480 MW each year, roughly 10% of Dorset's energy needs. The predictable total need for Dorset County and the BPC conurbation is about 8 GW, 16 times that current total.

**16. Dorset Council's commitment.** We believe that this imperative towards renewable energy should be urgently reflected in the planning policies and actions of both Dorset Council and the BPC Council. We welcome the commitment by Dorset Council in the Action Plan :

- “to work with renewable energy developers to secure new renewable energy generation to meet and exceed the needs of the Council
- “as local planning authority, to actively encourage renewable energy by identifying suitable areas in the local plan and creating guidance for developers
- “to undertake detailed resource mapping to confirm Dorset has the technical resources to be self-sufficient, and to identify potential sites in the Local Plan
- “to lobby central government over the major hurdles to renewable energy deployment, the Navitas Bay decision, investment needed on grid infrastructure and future of heat
- “to work in partnership with BCP to plan a zero carbon energy system in Dorset.2

**17. High priority.** We urge that high priority be given to this group of actions, in order that the flow of renewable energy can be rapidly and radically increased. We see high potential for production of solar power on the roofs of existing and new buildings; for use of ground-source and air-source heat pumps; for community energy schemes; and (as technologies develop) for the use of hydrogen and nitrogen as sources of power. Renewable energy

should be given higher importance in decisions about land-based installations, for example related to the impact of solar panels or even onshore wind turbines upon the county's landscapes or to the installation of solar panels on the roofs of listed buildings.

**18. Sites and Skills.** Dorset Council should urgently produce an analysis of territories or sites within the county suited to production of renewable energy through solar arrays, onshore wind turbines and micro hydro-electricity schemes. Objections to such installations are likely to be reduced if there is community ownership of, or direct local benefit from, the installations. Moreover, since Dorset is blessed with a long and diverse coastline, we place high importance on revival of the proposal for an offshore wind farm in Poole Bay (Navitas), and for the exploration of marine-source heat pumps or sea-bed tidal power, consistent with a busy seaway and with the World Heritage status of the Jurassic Coast. Skills in the fossil fuel industry workforce should be developed and re-skilled as needed towards the renewable sector, and harnessed to develop further opportunities for good quality employment in the county through training, apprenticeships and work experience. Community-led generation schemes, such as Dorset Community Energy's 'Energy Local' scheme in Bridport, should be encouraged and supported.

## **Buildings**

**19. Retrofit of existing buildings.** The Council should launch – in cooperation with parish and town and parish councils, housing associations and other collective property owners – an urgent and sustained programme to update the energy efficiency of dwellings throughout the county, in order to save energy, cut greenhouse gas emissions, reduce costs for householders, tackle fuel poverty and increase health and well-being. This may involve installation of damp-proof courses, roof insulation, double glazing or modern heating and cooking equipment. Where appropriate, it should embrace the installation of heat pumps, solar panels and other forms of renewable energy. It may be noted that homes with mortgages should achieve EPC C energy efficiency standard by 2033, with standards for lenders being set from 2025; and that rented properties, social homes and homes for sale must be EPC C by 2028. The retrofit programme should also extend to business and industrial premises, building upon the Government's energy efficiency target to reduce business and industrial energy consumption by 20% by 2030.

**20. Funding of retrofit.** This programme should build upon activity already pursued by predecessor local authorities and others; and should use funds available under the Government's Green Homes initiative and the Council's own Low Carbon and Healthy Homes funds. The programme should be given very high priority, because it achieves multiple gains, including reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, at low cost : it is 'low hanging fruit', ready to be plucked. Moreover, it puts to good continuing use the fixed capital and the embedded energy that we inherit from earlier generations.

**21. Skills and local leadership in retrofit.** Recent experiences of difficulty in launching retrofit projects suggest that investment is needed in training and skills for retro-fitting and energy efficiency measures, alongside renewable energy generation. Dorset Council should act to secure the recognition of more 'TrustMark' accredited installers and contractors in Dorset. Dorset Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership should work with schools and FE colleges, employers, town and parish councils and national organisations (e.g. the Centre for Sustainable Energy) to develop training and apprenticeship opportunities for 'green jobs' in this sector and to build a recovery from the pandemic based on skills and local investment.

**22. Information and local leadership.** There is need for effective information and encouragement to households – particularly to those on low income – on the measures they can take and the funds available for retrofit. Dorset Council should encourage and support housing associations, town and parish councils and community groups to develop local action plans to target and support low-income households to undertake the necessary work for greener, more energy-efficient and warmer homes. Dorset Council could consider

establishing a single point of contact for residents and businesses to access advice and expert guidance on retro-fitting and energy efficiency measures, as Wiltshire County Council and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service have done with Warmer Homes Wiltshire.

## **New dwellings**

**23. Zero Carbon design.** The Strategy states the aim of achieving Zero Carbon design on new homes, which it estimates may total 18,000 in the next decade. We reserve until we see the Local Plan our comments on the potential scale and location of new housing. But what is absolutely clear is that all new buildings should – from their inception – meet true Zero Carbon standards, so that they do not add to greenhouse gas emissions and will not subsequently need retrofit. The 6th Climate Budget sets 2025 *at the latest* for all new buildings to be zero carbon. We have heard the Leader of the Council complain that the current Government building standards demand less than true Zero Carbon and may prevent the Council from insisting on it. We urge the Council to join other local authorities in pressing the Government to raise the standard, and meanwhile to do all in its power to insist upon high standards.

**24. The action proposed.** We endorse the proposals in the Action Plan to :

- “set true net Zero Carbon homes standards through the Local Plan in partnership with other South West local authorities;
- encourage designs and layouts which lend themselves to renewable energy solutions, and provide guidance and advice for developers to achieve zero carbon standards; and
- design climate resilience into new buildings
- ensure that relevant housing strategies/policies incorporate the reduction of carbon emissions and increased risk to climate impacts
- for these purposes, act through the Dorset Housing strategy, planning guidance and advice to developers.”

For these purposes, we point to the high value of discussions between property owners, developers and planning officials before planning applications are completed and submitted. This procedure can secure high standards by persuasion; can avoid much conflict over bad designs; and can reduce the risk of appeals and high costs to the planning authority. We urge the Council to ensure that they have adequate staff to permit this vital process.

**25.Planning for resilience.** The Strategy provides for mainstreaming of climate resilience in future strategies and policies. As planning authority, the Dorset Council should ensure that all new housing and other buildings or structures are resilient in the face of climate change and other predictable forces; and that they contribute to the wider aims of the strategy, notably those related to resources and natural assets. To this end, the Local Plan and the development control process should :

- point new development *towards* sites which offer durability and long-term value; and *away from* sites, such as floodplains, coastal lands which are subject to long-term erosion or sites of high value for nature conservation or carbon sequestration, which should not be used for built development
- promote – in new development - the choice of aspect, layout and vegetation which maximises the direct use of the energy of the sun, and which retains and extends natural features such as woodlands, hedgerows, green spaces, streams and pondsinsist upon high social and environmental standards. New housing should
- encourage, and where possible require under building regulations, the production and use of renewable energy, for example through installation of heat pumps or of a linked array of solar panels on the roof of a row of older houses during retrofit or of new houses or other buildings, and through provision of electric vehicle charge points
- promote the use, in construction, of bio-based materials which have low embodied energy and which lock-in carbon, such as timber, clunch and straw; and generally prioritise the use of materials that contribute to a circular economy.

**26. Balance in communities.** The planning authority should also ensure balance and mutual support between the main physical elements in our communities, in order to achieve quality of life and to enable people to find that life without having to travel far from home. Additional housing alone will not sustain the vitality of a town or village. People of working age will only come to a place or stay in it if they have ready access to services and to jobs. We refer further to this under the heading 'Economy' below. Layout and location of building is vital in enabling reductions in the need to travel. Repurposing of redundant business premises (in the post-Covid shifts in employment patterns) can also contribute to this. These approaches should be clearly stated in the Local Plan.

**27. Additional gains.** New developments should proactively support renewable energy and promote patterns of development which reduce transport emissions. Most importantly, binding standards should be set to be net zero carbon and aim for up to 25% of biodiversity net gain. Proactively making zero carbon targets, sustainability and climate and ecological adaptations at the core of the planning process will be vital if Dorset is to reduce emissions from housing. Adaptations to over-heating and flood risk must be considered with measures put in place to monitor emissions, sequestration impacts of nature-based solutions and social, health and community co-benefits through the life of the development.

**28. Dorset Local Plan.** We look to the early adoption of a countywide Local Plan, replacing outdated local plans. It should incorporate crucial imperatives related to energy saving, support for renewable energy, protection of wildlife and enhancement of wildlife habitats, promotion of sustainable transport and of a circular economy, and measures to secure the long-term resilience of buildings, structures and communities in the face of climate change and economic uncertainty. We urge the Council to take full account of the responses to the forthcoming consultation on the draft Local Plan, as they did in relation to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy. The aim should be to secure a general endorsement of the Local Plan policies from residents of the county. To this end, the Plan should have a clear focus on the meeting of need generated within the County, rather than those imposed from outside. The Plan should adopt, as formal supplements, those Neighbourhood Plans which have already been approved. The Council should encourage and support the production of further Neighbourhood Plans.

### **Food, drink and personal choices**

**29. Personal choices.** A large part of the 43% of current greenhouse gas emissions which are attributed to "residential" and "commerce" arises from the choices that we make of what we buy, use or consume. If our food contains large elements of palm oil, its production may have involved the destruction of rain forest which is a prime sequester of carbon. If our house extension makes heavy use of concrete (with the large embedded energy of its raw materials), it will generate more emissions than if it was made of wood. If we make long journeys by car, or even worse by air, rather than rail or bus, we generate more greenhouse gas emissions.

*On the other hand ...*

If we buy our fruit and vegetables from local producers, rather than that which is imported from other countries, we will reduce the 'food miles' which generate emissions, and the food will be fresher. If we refuse to buy products which are multiply wrapped in single-use plastic, we will send messages back up the supply chain that we are demanding change. If we reduce our consumption of meat, we are helping to cut down on carbon emissions. People in Dorset are increasingly making decisions with these issues in mind. To buy sustainably is not always easy, particularly for people with low income. But the choices can be made, and people can gain ideas and encouragement from each other towards 'making a difference' in small or substantial ways. The impact of personal choices from 375,000 people can make a massive cumulative impact on the environmental challenges we face.

**30. Promoting change in lifestyles.** Action under the Strategy should therefore include encouragement to the householders of Dorset to consider those changes in their lifestyles

which can enable them to 'live more lightly on the earth'. The initiative towards change may come from any point in the supply chains of services or goods which are offered to, or demanded by, residents in this county. It may come from householders, retailers or primary providers of services such as builders, suppliers, regulatory bodies including Dorset Council itself or Government, which can use legislation, taxes etc. to encourage sustainable choices. Dorset Climate Action Network will encourage its member organisations to foster benign changes in lifestyles, through exchange of ideas and promotion of such initiatives as the Green Living handbook produced by Sustainable Dorset and through use of platforms such as Giki Zero and the new Carbon Footprinting Toolkit (currently being trialled).

**31. Food security.** Worsening climate change is widely forecast to cause more crop failures, in the UK and globally. Britain is currently only 60% self-sufficient in food, and far less so for vegetables and fruit. Dorset Council can take several steps to address this, including:

- Retaining county farms but focussing them on horticultural outputs and starter units wherever possible
- Using its own procurement to encourage more local production
- Requiring provision of land for allotments and home growing in any significant new housing development.

**32. Food waste.** A shocking dimension of the county's waste can be found by a visit to the Anaerobic Digester at Piddlehinton, run by the company ECO Energy. Each year it receives 30,000 tons of food waste from households in Dorset, Poole and Bournemouth, plus 10,000 tons from supermarkets and restaurants. This waste is ground up, diluted with 10,000 tons of milk washings from a Yeo valley dairy, placed for two weeks in settling tanks and then moved into great round silos with a domed top. There, methane gas is extracted as fuel for on-site generators producing electricity. When all the gas has gone, the remaining solids are spread as fertiliser on the fields of a neighbouring farm. This never-ending process is highly efficient, and it yields energy and fertiliser. But the scale of food waste is shocking. Collectively, we need to make better use of this precious resource, particularly at this time of rising demand for food through food banks. There is rising interest in local food projects, such as Bridport's 'Seeding our Future' initiative and Community Fridges.

## **Economy**

**33. Balanced communities.** Government policies and Local Plans tend to place excessive emphasis upon housing, as if its provision will ensure the long-term viability and resilience of communities. That is not the case. The crucial need is to ensure balance and mutual support between the main physical elements in our communities, in order to achieve quality of life and enable people to enjoy it without having to travel far from home. People of working age will only come to a place or stay in it if they have ready access to services and to jobs. Elderly people will only be able to live well in a village if they have access to at least basic services. Young people, on leaving school, will only stay in Dorset – or return to it after studies and early careers elsewhere – if they can find here the elements of a good life. It is the duty of Dorset Council, as planning authority, to sustain the balance between housing, services and jobs. Planning for true resilience must also focus on those most affected by climate change but least able to respond, due to income, age or personal circumstances.

**34. The green economy.** We suggest that the Council should launch a **Regenerative Dorset** programme, aiming to transform its economy to be green, sustainable in use of resources, with a strong dimension of local self-sufficiency (notably in food) and of circular activity including use of local timber in new buildings.

We look to Dorset Council, BCP Council and all relevant organisations to secure a good share for Dorset of the funds which the government is investing in the Green Revolution. ***"Is now the time to revisit the proposal for the offshore wind farm at Poole Bay (Navitas)?"***



**35. Workspace.** We call for the provision throughout the county of workspace, and particularly of modern, well-equipped and flexible workspace suited to use for offices, laboratories and workshops or light industry. The rural areas in Dorset have been, and should remain, rich in small and medium-sized enterprises. At a time of fragility and increased unemployment caused by the pandemic, existing and new enterprises may need access to modern energy-efficient workspace, created either by retrofit of existing buildings or by new build, and serviced by high quality broadband connectivity and public transport. The 'Economy' section of the Council's Strategy refers to the provision of new workspace, but the Action Plan refers only to new workspace at Dorset Innovation Park. That Park may have high-value as a seedbed and focus for enterprise, but it does not meet the need for workspace near where people live throughout the county. The Local Plan should provide for the creation of workspace; the rigorous protection of land zoned for that purpose; and vigorous action to promote the development of that land for that purpose. Support should be given for locally-based community and shared workspaces, offering opportunities for skills training, ICT access, collaborative ventures and sharing ideas, initiatives and resources with links to investment,

**36. A timber initiative.** The Council's Strategy is rich in references to farming, food and drink, the protection of natural capital, and the enrichment of natural habitats by tree planting and other methods. But it makes only limited reference to the county's woodlands and the potential which they represent for the provision of building materials with low embedded energy. We urge the early launch of a research and development initiative focused on the potential of the county's woodlands to produce timber for the purpose of buildings, furniture and other products. This could build on the experience of the many timber-using enterprises who meet each year at the Stock Gaylard Oak Fair; John Makepeace and the alumni of his former college at Parnham; the Architectural Association's campus at Hooke; and the long-established Welsh Woodlands (Coed Cymru) initiative, with its skilful use of low-calibre hardwood. Such an initiative could bring useful secondary income to farmers and other woodland owners; create local employment; and enable builders to reduce the use of concrete and other building materials which have heavy loads of embedded energy. Using timber for construction will increasingly be seen as better, in terms of cutting carbon emissions, than burning wood fuel.

## **Waste**

**37. Extent of recycling.** Dorset Council is rightly proud of its record as one of the top three local waste authorities in England, in terms of the proportion of waste collected by the Council that is now being recycled. But there is still significant potential for further recycling and (more importantly) for reduction or re-use of waste. We suggest that the Council should adopt a **Clean Dorset** programme, aiming to radically reduce its levels of air pollution to well below statutory limits, eliminate all single-use plastic and achieve the highest levels of waste reduction, re-use and recycling in the country. All waste management should adhere to the Proximity Principle and eliminate unnecessary waste miles within Dorset and preventing the importing of waste from outside Dorset by road or sea.

38. The **key opportunities** for such action appear to be the following :

- Single-use plastic, of which there is currently an enormous volume, and which forms a large part of the content of landfill and of the litter that disfigures many public spaces in Dorset. Public disgust with single use plastic is increasingly expressed by shoppers demanding less wrapping, and by the response to the Plastic Free Communities initiative led by Surfers against Sewage. But the volume of single-use plastic will not fall significantly until the Government introduces legal, fiscal or financial incentives for reduction of single-use plastic and a greater degree of recycling. Draft legislation to that effect is being brought forward by Friends of the Earth, with the signature of over 200 MPs including West Dorset MP Chris Loder. We urge Dorset Council to add its voice to those who are pressing for that legislation.

- **Business waste**, which has enormous volume throughout the county, largely in cardboard and plastic wrappings. Businesses must pay either Dorset Council or other contractors to take this waste for either recycling or landfill. There appears to be scope for securing economies of association or volume; for reduction in the plastic element through the national action (stated above) related to single-use plastic; for recycling of the remaining plastic, which should certainly not be burnt; and for composting of at least some of the cardboard (as a 'grey' element in the council's mass composting of green material) or perhaps the recycling of cardboard as (for example) installation in buildings. We urge the Council to take a hard look at these alternatives.
- **Construction waste**, from excavation, demolition or construction sites, is another element which is hard to recycle, but which – with effective liaison between those who produce it and those who might use it – could indeed be put to reuse or recycling to a greater degree than is achieved now, thus reducing the demand for sand, gravel and other hard building material, which have their own embedded energy and impact on the landscape. Dorset Council, in its own properties and developments, should set a lead in such liaison.

**39. Circular economy.** We urge the Council to explore the options stated above. It should also work with local manufacturers and producers to encourage product design that minimises waste, reduces the use of materials, and ensures that the materials that are used are re-usable or truly recyclable. It should encourage local product manufacturers to make their products truly repairable, and should support local repair shop initiatives. Sustainability and circular economy principles should be embedded in policy and form the basis of contracts with suppliers and third party organisations.

**40. Litter.** The Council should extend its support for community litter picks and beach cleans; for research in this field; and for the campaigns of Litter Free Coast and Sea and Litter Free Dorset to heighten public awareness on issues of litter, plastic pollution and recycling. It should work with local community groups to make litter-free streets and roads the norm. It should work with takeaway coffee shops, meal and snack retailers to ensure that customers do not discard packaging, and work with petrol stations to ensure that customers do not discard disposable gloves.

**41. Portland waste incinerator.** We express our strong support for the opposition to the proposed incinerator on Portland. For each ton of waste burnt 1 ton of CO<sub>2</sub> would be emitted and ¼ ton of toxic ash created. It would cause significant additional heavy traffic through Weymouth and onto Portland; and would be a significant source of air and water pollution, with negative effects on local residents' health and the sensitive marine environment. It would block, for the 25 years of its expected life, the search for more acceptable solutions to the reuse, recycling or disposal of waste.

## **Water**

**42. Action against flooding.** Climate change – with wetter winters and more storms – is raising concern in many parts of the county about the prospects for flooding, despite the heavy investment in flood control of recent years. To cope with this threat, the Environment Agency and other organisations are correctly looking to nature-based solutions, such as river catchment management designed to slow down the flow of flood water from the upper streams. This can bring significant other benefits, notably carbon capture and strengthening of ecosystems through the protection of soil and planting of trees, plus diversification of land use and of farm incomes. The process of river catchment management should be vigorously pursued. Planning powers should be used to prevent built development on flood plains.

**43. Water quality.** Like many other counties, Dorset has serious problem of low water quality in our rivers, many of which have suffered from the outwash of soil erosion, agricultural chemicals and industrial activity, plus (in some places) the discharge of raw sewage. Safe seaside bathing and water sports have been increasingly endangered by frequent sewage overflows. Research has shown that water companies discharged raw

sewage into UK rivers 200,000 times during 2019. Water companies need to be held to account and pressured to take responsibility and control over these spills, with regular water quality checks in rivers and on the seaside. As immediate action, Dorset Council should lobby in support of the Sewage (Inland Water) Bill currently going through Parliament.

**44. A Swim Dorset campaign.** Looking ahead, Dorset Council should work with the Environment Agency, Wessex Water and other agencies to launch an ambitious **Swim Dorset** programme, designed to make every river and stream in Dorset safe for children to play and swim, and the water at every beach safe for residents and tourists alike. This can build on the major schemes of water quality improvement now being pursued in the Frome and other rivers. Rigorous protection of natural systems, especially wetlands and water meadows, can help to conserve and replenish groundwater resources, reduce runoff (erosion and flooding) and contribute to enhanced water quality. Tree planting to replace marginal farmland can reduce agri-chemical runoff, eutrophication and poor water quality, whilst simultaneously increasing natural carbon capture. People living in each river valley should be given opportunity to take part, to feel more connected with nature and to others along the river.

### **Natural assets**

**45. The county's heritage.** Dorset has an exceptional heritage of spectacular landscapes, geological formations, wildlife habitats, archaeological and historic features and a rich coastline. These have been recognised and offered protection through designation of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Jurassic Coast World Heritage, many National Nature Reserves, Marine Protected Areas and other international, national and local designations. This heritage is not only of high value in its own right, but also contributes greatly to the well-being of the community and to the Dorset economy. Natural systems are our best and cheapest method of countering the impacts of climate change. They form a key element of environmental and economic resilience against change. The UNESCO World Heritage designation of the Jurassic Coast is to educate the world about past extinctions : Dorset Council should extend that understanding to embrace the recent geological impact of mankind (the Anthropocene) and the threat of a '6<sup>th</sup> extinction'.

**46. Declining health of natural systems.** Throughout the world, natural systems are being impoverished by cutting down of forests, draining of wetlands, intensification of farming and the switch of land to industry and urban use. Climate change is contributing heavily to loss of wildlife, through increased storm winds and erosion, and the poleward spread of pests and diseases. Grave loss of wildlife is rebounding on the well-being of people everywhere. Here in Dorset, this global process is experienced in very simple ways - the reduced number of swallows, hedgehogs, butterflies, bees and other pollinators; the brown soil which is washed down our streams after a storm; the dead elm trees and the ugly impact of dieback disease on the ash trees; and the damage caused by litter, fly tipping and accidental or deliberate fires

**47. Environmental degradation.** These simple signs indicate a deeper underlying problem. Dorset is seen as a county relatively rich in wildlife. But the reality is that Dorset has for decades seen environmental degradation and serious loss of wildlife, and this continues. Britain has been described by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds as one of the most nature-depleted countries on earth, and Dorset's environment and natural capital have not escaped the impact of this. Parts of the landscape are in a poor state, and many habitats are degraded.

**48. AONB or National Park ?** The Dorset AONB Partnership is striving to make good these faults, using such funds as it can secure, but it has acknowledged that it lacks the resources that are needed to achieve major improvements. We therefore look forward to the outcome of the Government's review of the governance and funding of protected landscapes, based upon the report prepared by Julian Glover and his team. This may lead to the strengthening of the powers and resources of the AONB Partnership, or to the government's acceptance of

the widely-publicised proposals for the creation of a Dorset National Park to replace the AONB.

*Meanwhile, what can we do to make good this loss of wildlife and to restore the health of natural systems ?*

**49. Dorset Lifelines programme.** Dorset Council could launch a **Dorset Lifelines** programme, aiming to conserve soils and to halt and reverse the loss of wildlife through widespread nature recovery and radical changes in land use and land management, pioneered on Council-owned land and County Farms. It should clarify the present state of the natural environment and then set clear targets for the strengthening of habitats and for reversal of the loss of wildlife. Fortunately there is much available evidence, which can be accessed through the Dorset Environmental Records Centre. This Centre holds a remarkable battery of overlay maps, showing many detailed aspects of the environment. These maps are used by the key environmental organisations in the county, including the AONB team and the Dorset Wildlife Trust, in their own programmes of action to protect and improve the environment.

**50. Citizen science.** This evidence base can then be used for setting targets for the enrichment of wildlife habitats and the strengthening of natural systems; clarifying the ways in which these targets may be pursued; and pursuing a linked series of actions. There is scope also for citizen science in this field. Dorset Council should work with a local university to set up a series of 'Community Science' initiatives to help monitor ecological recovery in the County e.g. monitoring populations of water vole or swift screaming parties. Many people want to feel they can take part in ecological recovery, and not everyone wants to be planting trees! The Council can commission third parties, such as a university or the Dorset Wildlife Trust, to coordinate these popular initiatives.

**51. Nature recovery networks.** There is great scope in Dorset for the creation of nature recovery networks. The most striking example is the major restorative initiative in the recently expanded Purbeck National Nature Reserve, where Natural England, National Trust, Dorset Wildlife Trust and private landowners are cooperating. Elsewhere in the county, Dorset Wildlife Trust is seeking to protect, restore and re-create precious habitats, so that wildlife has the space to recover. Its aim is to see at least 30% of the land in Dorset embraced within Nature Recovery Networks by the year 2030, building upon the 2,200 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest which it has already identified in the county. It is working with farmers and landowners to create buffer zones around these Sites. There is also scope to work across county borders and link to ecological and restoration and rewilding projects in Devon, Somerset, Wiltshire and Hampshire; and to collaborate with universities, local councils, Climate Action Networks and civic society in neighbouring counties.

**52. River catchment management.** Four leading environmental organisations – Environment Agency, Wessex Water, Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Dorset Wildlife Trust – are together leading a county-wide programme which is progressively applying river catchment management techniques to major rivers within the county. The broad aims of this programme are to enhance the landscape, enrich the wildlife habitats, alleviate flooding, reduce pollution and improve water quality, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by capturing and storing carbon.

**53. Tree planting.** Through its England Trees programme, the government is promoting the planting of millions of trees in order to increase the proportion of England's land area in woodland from 10% to 12% over the next two decades. In Dorset, the AONB Partnership is promoting the planting of trees, particularly in those places where the trees can contribute to the strengthening of ecosystems, alleviation of flooding and reduction in air pollution. To this end, the AONB has recently published guidance in the form of maps for each parish in its area, which those places which would benefit from the planting of new woodlands and the

revival of hedgerows. These maps will be helpful to those landowners, parish councils and voluntary groups who wish to promote the planting of trees.

**54. Practical action.** Across the county, the volume of tree planting is increasing, assisted by the Woodland Trust, The Conservation Volunteers and others who supply free trees, using funds gifted to offset carbon emissions. Tree planting is an excellent way to involve people in practical action and thus in the broader campaign climate and ecology campaign : many people want to do something tangible like this. Widespread action in this field could be encouraged by reinstating the Eco Schools initiative in Dorset; launching a Tree Warden scheme for Dorset; and setting up a 'Dorset Great Wood' initiative to encourage each town and parish (and County Farm) to plant their own Great Wood. Dorset Climate Action Network will encourage such action.

**55. Transition on farms.** The farms of Dorset contribute significantly to the nation's food security and food supply, and also to exports. Their woodlands and hedgerows, and their pastureland soils, contribute to the capture and storage of carbon. But they currently produce about 10% of the greenhouse gas emissions in Dorset, through the diesel used by farm machinery, the fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides and the methane emitted by cattle. Moreover, it is clear that the intensification of farming has contributed greatly to the loss of wildlife habitats and a reduction in wildlife populations.

**56. Public goods.** To achieve the purposes of the strategy will therefore demand a transition on farms. The Government is in process of introducing a significant shift in public support to farming, from direct financial support to a sophisticated system of 'public payment for public goods', including enhanced care for sites of nature conservation interest and other environmental resources. This shift will be gradually introduced over coming years, and should bring a gradual easing of the adverse pressure which intensive farming can place upon natural systems. The changes will not be easy for the farming community, particularly at a time of uncertainty over Brexit and future trade deals with other countries. Those who seek to implement the strategy will need to recognise the pressure on farmers and seek ways to help them through this transition.

**57. Private land.** Much benefit for wildlife and the fixing of carbon can come from wildlife-friendly management of private gardens and land. There is growing public interest in Dorset in such wildlife friendly management. Dorset Wildlife Trust offers excellent advice related to such management. We stress the importance of retaining permeable garden surfaces and natural space to reduce runoff, increase infiltration and absorb carbon.

## **Transport**

**58. Shifting transport modes.** The Council's Strategy records that transport is responsible for 31% of all greenhouse gas emissions in the County. In 2018, about 2,500 million vehicle-miles were spent in the Dorset Council area. In the UK, only 1% of journeys are by public transport, and this proportion is probably even less in Dorset. Transport is also a significant source of air pollution and plastic residues and other wastes which pollute land, rivers and the sea.

**59. Elements of action.** In the face of this massive impact, the Strategy correctly states that "We face a major challenge to shift transport modes". In our view, the key elements in that shift will be :

- Reducing the need for personal and business travel, along with freight, through strengthening of local economies and the use of land-use planning policies to enable people to work in or near their homes
- Increased use of walking and cycling, encouraged by increased networks of safe and dedicated routes for that purpose and by planning policies which protect proximity between homes, jobs and services

- Provision of a network of E-bike rental hubs to promote increased cycling and connectivity between towns and transport modes (e.g. railway stations to towns and villages).
- Radical improvement in public transport services, together with incentives to people (other than the mobility-impaired) to use them rather than private transport : this will especially help those without private transport or who are unable to drive)
- Shift from fossil fuel to electric power or (as it comes on stream) green hydrogen power
- Reduction in the number of private vehicles through car sharing, e- car rental clubs and better public transport connections between towns and modes of transport

**60. Cross-border links.** There is also scope to work across county borders and link to Active Travel planning and provision, car-sharing, e-car rental clubs and e-bike rental hub planning in Devon, Somerset, Wiltshire and Hampshire; and to collaborate with universities, local councils, Climate Action Networks and civic society in neighbouring counties to engage local communities in planning their future towns and mobility options (e.g. the Royal College of Art's recent research on community engagement and sustainable transport planning, presented by the Minister of Transport to the Transport Planning society on 16 November 2020.).

**61. Leadership** in making this shift lies with Dorset Council, as planning, highway and local transport authority. It also has a major role to play in bringing forward to 2040 (from 2050) the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body's target date for making transport net-zero. We welcome the provisions in the Council's Strategy for improving low carbon transport infrastructure in the Local Plan and the Local Transport Plan, investment (from multiple funding sources) in walking, cycling and public transport, and redirecting money from strategic roads to low carbon transport; and wish to see them driven forward as a priority. We note that DC and BCP councils have secured £79 million in 2020 from Department of Transport's Transforming Cities fund to deliver a large sustainable transport network. But the Council must not, in advance of the expected national decarbonisation, commit itself to (or support the WGSTB plans for) infrastructure initiatives, such as major highway schemes, which will lock in higher emissions for decades to come.

### **Making it happen**

**62. Co-ownership of the Strategy.** We strongly endorse the view of the Council that the pursuit of this Strategy and Action Plan must draw upon skills and resources from across Dorset Council and from a wider partnership of interests in the county. The Council aims to "build support from stakeholders and the wider public and develop partnership working on all aspects of climate change action". The challenge is indeed to enlist – as co-owners of the Strategy – the communities, enterprises and organisations of Dorset, including town and parish councils; and to encourage, stimulate and (where appropriate) coordinate their contribution to what the Council calls this 'massive task'. We comment below on the measures which are proposed by the Council in order to stimulate this sense of co-ownership and partnership.

**63. Emergency Partnership.** The Strategy proposes the creation of a Dorset Climate Emergency Partnership Group, as a focal point in "developing a Dorset wide partnership with key public, private and third sector partners". We support this proposal as a focal point for achieving true co-ownership and shared responsibility for the pursuit of the Strategy. **The** Group should be renamed the Dorset Climate and Ecological Emergency Partnership Group. The representatives of different partners should be there on equal terms with the Council, in recognition of this shared responsibility. The Group should have a strategic overview of targets, timetables, priorities and major projects within the Strategy programme. It should not have responsibility for the direct management or oversight of individual projects : this responsibility should rest with those partners who are directly involved in each project.

**64. Staff and expertise.** The Group should have its own staff, funded by the Council : note that Cornwall County Council has a team of 12 people working full-time on their Climate Action Plan, six of whom are dedicated to managing relationships with external partners. A task force composed of suitably qualified people should be commissioned to assess the evidence and design the workstreams required to deliver an area-wide plan. This should be resourced from across partner organisations and draw on their specific skill sets, including business knowledge; knowledge of finance and funding mechanisms; economic and financial policy measures to achieve carbon reductions and ecological recovery; understanding of the role of behavioural measures and incentives; knowledge of carbon opportunity modelling, assessment and data management; and risk assessment skills.

**65.** Helpful initiatives currently underway include the new Carbon Footprinting Toolkit created for town and parish councils and local communities by the Centre for Sustainable Energy and the University of Exeter, backed by BEIS for the government. Work is being done to ensure the UN Sustainable Development Goals inform policy, projects and planning and that local economies can be influenced by Doughnut Economy, Planetary Boundary, Circular Economy consideration and thinking. The Group could work closely with DAPTC and NALC to ensure engagement and support from local communities through their elected representatives.

### **Funding the response**

**66. Former European funds.** Enterprises and community initiatives in many parts of Dorset have benefitted substantially in recent years from grants through the EU-funded LEADER programme deployed by the Southern and Northern Dorset Local Action Groups. This funding made possible, for example, the creation of the community shops at Thorncombe and Broadwindsor, the expansion of the fruit processing enterprise at Liberty Orchard in Halstock, and the extensive tourism signposting in Dorchester. Further funding came into the county from the European funds deployed by the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, although the rural areas of Dorset appeared to benefit much less from those funds than the main urban and industrial areas of the county. Most of these European funds have now stopped, indeed the LEADER funds were exhausted more than a year ago.

**67. Shared Prosperity Fund.** So, we have been waiting for the launch of the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, which we understand will replace the previous European Structural Investment Funds, including the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (which included the LEADER funding) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. We hope that the aims and elements of the Shared Prosperity Fund will be strongly geared towards the climate and ecological agendas; and we believe that the shrewd use of these funds could substantially contribute to the funding of the Dorset Strategy. If the deployment of the Shared Prosperity Fund rests with the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP), we urge the Dorset Council to ensure that the funding is fairly deployed – in proportion to social and economic needs – across the whole area served by DLEP.

**68. Other National Funds.** Dorset Council and other agencies, organisations, enterprises or households can call down national funds for action that contributes to the climate, ecology and resilience campaign. Recent examples are the Dorset Council's receipt of £483,000 from the Government's Active Travel fund to improve walking and cycling routes in the county; the grant of £763,900 from the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund to Dorset AONB Partnership for two projects - Purbeck Heaths Large Grazing Unit, **and** Greening West Dorset's Hills and Vales; and the grant from the National Lottery Community Fund to Beaminster Town Council to build a skateboard park. The Government's review of Protected Landscapes, mentioned at paragraph 43, may bring significant additional funds either to strengthen the resources of the AONB or to replace it with the proposed Dorset

National Park. We note that the South Downs National Park, comparable in size, receives some £10 million per year in core Government support and secured an additional £50 million in project funding during its first 5 years including grants for sustainable transport initiatives

**69. Equity capital.** The Strategy refers to “securing innovative financial arrangements for climate change projects and programmes”. We see high potential for securing ‘equity capital’ from residents and organisations within the county, as a source of crucial finance for the necessary action on climate change and related purposes. A clear example of the willingness of residents to provide such equity capital is shown by the rapid and complete response to the offer of 5%-interest shares in Dorset Community Energy. The county has many people with the financial means to help with action in this way, some of them elderly, keen to help but unable to contribute physically to the climate action. Their funding could enable not only action at county level, such as that of Dorset Community Energy, but also action at the local level by Community Land Trusts or similar non-profit organisations, which collectively could play a major part in making the Strategy happen. We urge the Council to be ready to offer advice to local organisations of these kinds as they search for ways to turn their aspirations into action.

### **Engagement and communication**

**70. Engagement.** We welcome the emphasis in the strategy on the need for engagement and communication. We note that the Council will “continue and extend its activities for awareness and behaviour change; will develop a comprehensive communications strategy, including information on climate change and ecology; and open an ongoing dialogue between DC and Dorset residents. It will “help to facilitate new and existing community-led projects and community organisations, and work with these groups to signpost and communicate a shared message”. The Action Plan states that the Council will “build support from stakeholders and the wider public by informing and educating on the benefits and opportunities of acting on climate change; and creating, maintaining and developing partnership working on all aspects of climate change action”.

**71. Vision for the county.** We believe that the steps summarised above should be supported by the shaping, through citizens’ assemblies and representative groups, of a Vision for the county which will catch the imagination and enlist the energies of all. We offer a simple version of such a vision on the first page of this paper. The need will be to identify the main sections of the community – large companies, small enterprises, town and parish councils, societies and clubs of all kinds, neighbourhood or village communities, churches, households etc. – and find ways to connect with them.

**72. Town and parish councils.** The Strategy refers to the declarations of emergency made by many town and parish councils. It provides for support to town and parish councils to implement the Strategy. The Action Plan includes “Support to town and parish councils to develop and implement their organisation and area-wide climate action plans : this is as well as helping them engage with residents to encourage community action and drive change at a grassroots community level”. This is of high importance. Many of the actions set out in the Strategy and Action Plan may be best conceived and pursued at the level of local communities. Dorset Council should be ready to delegate action to town and parish councils, and to provide staff expertise and financial resources to support the action of these local councils within the scope of the Strategy. It should establish urgently – what is now missing – a formal statement of the relationship between the recently created unitary authority and the highly varied secondary tier of local authorities, some of whom currently feel under-regarded, under-resourced and even powerless to make significant things happen. Working closely with NALC’s Climate Action Task & Finish group and DAPTC, as well as directly with local councils, would enable a co-operative, collaborative approach to provide impetus and support for actions to engage communities in planning their futures (e.g. the recent Royal College of Art research project in Lyme Regis and two other UK towns



on community engagement and sustainable transport planning, providing a rich source of ideas, challenges and visions from residents.

**73. Neighbourhood plans.** Town and parish councils, with their local knowledge, should use vigorously their role as statutory consultees on plans and planning applications. They should prepare Neighbourhood Plans, in order to gain formal recognition of the wishes of their population related to the type and location of new development and the protection of wildlife areas and other features of local importance. Working with local partners, they can take initiative in projects to conserve energy, to create renewable energy, to reduce and recycle rubbish, to use local resources and promote a circular economy, to secure a sound balance between housing, services and employment, and to protect wildlife.

**74. Community-led projects and organisations.** Dorset is already rich in voluntary organisations at county, district or local level, many of whom are itching to contribute to the pursuit of the Strategy and Action Plan. They contributed to the earlier round of public consultation on the draft Strategy : they appreciate the way that the Council has brought their ideas into the Strategy : they are now eager to offer their energy to realise the aspirations that they expressed. The Council states the intention to “help and facilitate new and existing community led projects and community led organisations”. It also states – which is very welcome – that an “Additional staff resource is in place” to provide that help and facilitation. The formal launch of a programme of support for community-led projects and organisations should be among the earliest actions under the Strategy.

**75. Public engagement.** We welcome the statement that the Council will “build support from stakeholders and the wider public by informing and educating on the benefits and opportunities of acting on climate change and creating, maintaining and developing partnership working on all aspects of climate change action”. We note also that the Council intends to “provide more accessible and digestible information on climate change and ecology and the actions we can all take through a range of channels : these will include upgrading our climate change website, developing an online information hub for sharing information and best practice, and ... encouraging an open and ongoing dialogue between the Council and Dorset residents.” We see this as a crucial dimension in the pursuit of the Strategy, and we urge the Council to place greater emphasis upon it, in partnership with schools, the Press, social media, community-led organisations and others.

**76. Behavioural change.** Retrofit of existing homes, and standards of sustainable design in new housing, will enable householders and their families – if they wish – to “live more lightly on the land” in terms of their carbon and ecological footprint. But the radical reduction in this footprint depends also upon widespread behavioural change. This calls for the urgent launching of the engagement programme which Dorset Council envisages. The Council states its intention to “continue and extend activities related to awareness and behaviour change”. We urge that community-led organisations be involved in this process. There is scope for widespread community-led initiatives, such as the Green Living project initiated by Sustainable Dorset, which enables groups of households to work together in reducing their call upon energy, water and other resources and thereby also saving money; the new Carbon Footprinting Toolkit from the Centre for Sustainable Energy; and platforms like GIKI Zero.

**77. Dorset Climate Action Network.** Our Network has been set up in response to the rapidly growing public concern about the impact of climate change, the use and abuse of the world's resources, the loss of wildlife and the related threats to social justice at global, national and local level. The Network aims to stimulate awareness of these issues and to support action by people and local organisations throughout Dorset County, as a complement to action by national government, Dorset Council, BCP Council and other agencies. We are in process of building our membership, particularly among town and parish councils, community-led organisations and individuals. We stand ready to work with Dorset Council in implementing the measures summarised above. We ask to be considered

for membership of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Partnership. We are ready to work with Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils and other county-level organisations in articulating and stimulating the role of second-tier local authorities and community organisations throughout the county. We are ready to contribute to the public engagement activity proposed by Dorset Council.

Dorset CAN final response to Dorset Council CEES 180121

This response is supported by the following organisations

**Beaminster Area ECO Group – 130 members in 15 parishes**

**Beaminster Church ECO Group – 10 members**

**Dorchester Area Churches Together Ecology Group (Frances Hogwood) ? members**

**Dorset Climate Action Network – 400 members**

**Dorset Green New Deal - ? members**

**Extinction Rebellion Dorset – 800 members**

**Friends of Rodwell Trail and Sandsfoot Castle Gardens, Weymouth**

**Friends of the Earth East Dorset ? members**

**Lyme Regis Development Trust (Belinda**

**Lyme Regis One Planet Working Group (Belinda)**

**Planet Purbeck – 300 members**

**Planet Shaftesbury – 300 subscribers to Newsletter**

**Seeding our Future** [www.seedingourfuture.org.uk](http://www.seedingourfuture.org.uk)

**Transition Town Bridport – 73 members**

**Zero Carbon Dorset- Members?**

**Transition Town Dorchester -12 members of core group plus member organisations**

**Turn Lyme Green/Plastic Free Lyme Regis (Polly Benfield) ? members**

**Western Area Transport Action Group (WATAG) (Colin Dival) members ?**

**WeymouthTogether Community Network** (umbrella group of 43 local community groups, charities, social enterprises, businesses and local authorities in the Weymouth area).