**Climate and Environmental Emergency**



**Submission of policy ideas to the Dorset Council**

**Preamble and summary**

Friends of the Earth applaud the Dorset Council for its Declaration of a Climate Emergency. We urge that the scope of this Emergency embraces not only the impacts of climate change, but also the heavy and continuing loss of biodiversity, and the challenge of waste in all fields and particularly plastic. We welcome the formation of the Dorset Climate Emergency Panel. We urge the Council to create a wide-ranging Action Plan, focused on the actions which lie within the Council’s powers and resources and those to be taken by partners. This Plan should be prepared in a highly participative manner, in order to provoke awareness and action by the citizens, communities, enterprises and organisations of Dorset.

**International and national context.**

The Council will be fully aware of the recent rapid rise in public and political awareness of the challenges posed by climate change, loss of biodiversity, plastic and other waste. There is now high expectation that governments everywhere will:

* Honour the commitments made at the Paris Conference on Climate Change 2015
* Intensify that commitment in the light of the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of October 2018
* Review their actions for protection of biodiversity in the light of the International Science-Policy Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services report of May 2019
* Join in the global campaign to slow down, and in due course reverse, the appalling accumulation of plastic waste on land and sea.

All levels of government must respond to this expectation. Local authorities should act, and provide leadership for action by all stakeholders in their territories.

**Impact on Dorset**

This emergency is likely to provoke the reactions shown below, which will challenge all citizens and organisations in Dorset: but it can also offer many opportunities to strengthen and diversify the County’s economy and sustain its communities.

***Transport***

* Rise in taxes on petrol and diesel, or fuel rationing (which could be fairer on low-income people), designed to curb single-vehicle travel
* Increased use of electric vehicles, and increased demand for charging points
* Rising demand for rail and bus services, on a fully integrated basis
* Increased desire for more and safer walking and cycling routes
* Increased use of IT as an alternative to personal travel and as a vehicle for interactions of all kinds e.g. in medicine, education, purchasing

***Local value***

* Desire to protect local services; and to secure a better local balance and good local transport links between homes, jobs and services
* Increase in home-based tourism, in order to avoid air travel
* Greater interest in buying local farm and woodland products

***Energy***

* Phasing out of fossil fuels and calls to ban exploration or new extraction of them
* Rising demand for renewable energy from geothermal, solar and wind resources
* Increased investment in carbon-neutral homes and buildings, and in retrofitting buildings to reduce carbon emissions and conserve energy

***Land use***

* Altered diets, with more focus on vegetarian and vegan food, and less on meat or dairy products – with consequent response by producers
* Pressure on farmers to reduce herbicides, pesticides and inputs derived from fossil fuels, set more land aside, and adapt farming systems to protect wildlife
* Change in land use from farming to woodlands, wetlands or other wildlife habitats
* Significant increase in trees and woodlands, for carbon capture and other reasons
* Rising emphasis on river catchment management, in order to conserve soil and water quality, minimise flooding, ameliorate drought and diversify wildlife habitats

***Waste***

* Measures to reduce food waste and the use of single-use plastic and non-recyclable waste of all kinds: increased investment in recycling, upcycling and long-life products: strengthening of the circular economy.

**Action by the Dorset Council**

In the context of these expectations, we urge the Dorset Council to consider the following actions:

**1. Extend the Declaration to embrace Climate and Environmental Emergency.** Reports on the devastating worldwide loss of biodiversity have shown the multiple causal links between greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, loss of biodiversity, waste and pollution. They need to be tackled as a whole, across a spectrum of policies and activities.

2. **Climate and Environment Action Plan.** The challenge of ameliorating climate change, loss of biodiversity, waste and pollution demands action across a range of policies and activities. We urge the Council to prepare a **Climate and Environment Action Plan** as the guiding basis for the Council’s own action and for commitments by partner organisations. This Plan should relate coherently to other strategies prepared by the Council (notably the Local Plan) and to those of other organisations e.g. the Industrial Strategy of Dorset LEP, the Climate Adaption and Mitigation Plan of the Dorset LNP, and the AONB Management Plan.

3. **Public participation**. The response to the emergency will only gain the necessary width and urgency if it becomes “owned” by the public. The Action Plan should be prepared in an urgent and highly participative manner, in order to provoke awareness and action by the citizens, enterprises and organisations of Dorset. It should draw upon the expertise of many partners in Dorset, and should be open to review and adaptation as we learn how to achieve the necessary radical changes

4. **Strategic Aims**. As a starting point for the above processes, we suggest that the Dorset Council adopt the following strategic aims:

a. to secure rapid and radical reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases

b. to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity in the county

c. to cut the volume of waste across all sectors, and to achieve reuse or recycling of all remaining waste.

*5.* **Elements of policy and action***.* In the Annex, we outline suggested elements of policy and action which arise from the strategic aims stated above, and which we believe are practical and affordable for the Council or other partners. The elements are stated individually, but will need to be effectively linked and integrated within the Climate and Environment Action Plan.

Annex

***Proposals for***

**Policies and actions to be included in the Climate & Environment Action Plan**

***Actions “in house”***

In order to stimulate action by others, the Council should provide exemplars of true and updated sustainability in managing its own resources.

1. **Council’s own buildings**. On existing buildings: secure energy efficiency through insulation, automatic door closing, automatic light switches etc.: investigate possible energy creation (e.g. solar pv or solar thermal). On new buildings: minimise embedded energy, achieve high-energy efficiency, carbon neutrality and net environmental gain: provide a model for Dorset by rigorous application of building regulations and the highest possible environmental standards.

2. **Land owned or managed by the Council.** On country parks, picnic sites and open spaces, enrich the wildlife habitats and opportunities for outdoor recreation while minimising use of fossil fuels and cutting out use of herbicides and pesticides. On school grounds, enrich wildlife habitats and opportunities for outdoor education. On county farms, work with tenant farmers to reduce damaging inputs and carbon emissions, to set more land aside, to adapt farming regimes to protect wildlife etc. This can provide a model for other landowners and tenant farmers to follow.

3. **Vehicles and equipment used by the Council.**  Move rapidly towards universal use of electric vehicles and sharp reduction in use of fossil fuel.

4.**Procurement & investment.** For its own buildings and as a block purchaser for many schools, the Council should buy green energy. It should ensure tight control over the use of water; use recycled paper; and buy fresh food from local sources. Its Pension Fund should divest from fossil fuels and consider investing in renewable energy.

***Transport***

5. **Highways.** Focus highway expenditure on maintenance of roads to facilitate local movement; traffic calming in settlements; and infrastructure to support development of necessary housing and workspace. For major road schemes, the focus should be on promoting economy of movements, not on increasing gross capacity for traffic.

6. **Public transport.** Work with rail and bus companies to expand public transport services in a fully integrated way, with timetable links between different services. Encourage bus companies and taxi companies to use electric vehicles.

7. **Footpaths and cycle ways.** Keep existing rights of way in good order: promote their use, secure (e.g. through planning conditions on new development) extension to the rights-of-way network, and create a linked-up cycleway network.

8. **Other actions to encourage reduced use of motor vehicles or to cut air pollution** – encourage car-sharing; promote park-and-ride schemes in larger settlements; limit car-parking provision; use parking revenue to fund the Climate Action Plan); and, where necessary, designate Emissions Zones or Clean Air Zones

***Waste, energy and IT***

9. **Waste collection, recycling and disposal.** Promote and incentivise reduction in waste of food and other resources; seek to end the use of single-use plastic and non-recyclable products; support increased investment in recycling, upcycling and long-life products; support application in the county of the Plastic Free system promoted by Surfers against Sewage; intensify the work of Litter Free Dorset.

10. **Advisory service on energy and carbon.** Continue and strengthen the Low Carbon Dorset advisory service in order to promote energy efficiency, renewable energy production and cuts in greenhouse gas emissions throughout the county.

11. **Broadband.** Urgently complete coverage of the whole county with high-capacity broadband, and promote the value of this network to facilitate human contacts of all kinds in a way that reduces the need for carbon-generating travel.

***Planning***

12.The Council’s role as strategic, mineral and local planning authority is of crucial importance in the implementation of the Climate and Environment Action Plan. We urge that it be used to:

* Support the phasing out of fossil fuel production within the county, including a ban on exploration and new extraction
* Promote the supply of renewable energy from geothermal, solar and on-shore wind resources; and from biomass resources including biodegradable waste, provided that a net reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is confirmed
* Support the provision of charging points for electric vehicles
* Support actions and developments which enable people to live, work, shop etc. locally, with limited travel. This embraces:
* Maintenance and strengthening of local services
* Support for affordable housing
* Support for job creation, including the key role of the planning and highway authority in securing the development of designated workspace, in a manner described in the recent paper from the DLEP Rural Enterprise Group on ‘Public investment in workspace development’
* Through vigorous use of planning powers and building regulations, promote high quality in new housing or other built development, vis-à-vis:
* High proportion of affordable housing, to meet local needs (where necessary, and particularly in smaller settlements, the provision of affordable housing should be assisted through the approval of ‘exceptions sites’ and support for the work of community land trusts)
* Energy efficiency
* Inclusion of energy generation e.g. solar, air & ground heat pumps. Community energy generation schemes should receive planning assistance and support.
* Sustainable building materials
* SUDS for water, sewerage etc.
* Assurance of net environmental gain, including planting to create benign microclimates and to support wildlife
* Inclusion of local facilities – playgrounds, open space, shelters, footpaths etc.

**13. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**. The Dorset Council has a prime responsibility (working with partner organisations) for the effective protection, management and enhancement of the Dorset AONB and of the World Heritage Jurassic Coast. The partnership activities and management plans provide a clear opportunity to apply the aims of the Climate and Environment Action Plan. These plans can contribute to:

* Articulation of policies, programmes and projects for the enrichment of wildlife habitats
* Adoption, by landowners and land managers, of management regimes which will halt and reverse the loss of wildlife, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and phase out the use of pesticides, herbicides and inputs based on fossil fuels)
* Negotiation of changes in land use from farming to woodlands, wetlands or other wildlife habitats
* Increased use of river catchment management, in order to conserve soil, maintain water quality, minimise flooding, ameliorate drought and diversify wildlife habitats
* Encouragement of local adding of value to farm and woodland products
* Provision for, and promotion of, walking, cycling and outdoor recreation
* Promotion of home-based tourism, in order to avoid air travel; increased provision of tourism facilities; and management of tourism pressures
* Choice of appropriate locations for the supply of renewable energy from geothermal, solar, wind and biomass resources including biodegradable waste.

The AONB Partnership has noted that its ability to achieve these aims is constrained by its financial resources. In this context, the Council may wish to consider the proposals which it has received for the creation of a Dorset National Park which could bring to the County significant national funds to assist the work stated above.

14. **DLNP, DLEP& Shared Prosperity Fund.** The actions described above demand resources beyond those of the Dorset Council. So, the Climate and Emergency Action Plan must be a partnership document. Crucial partners are likely to be :

* Dorset Local Nature Partnership, with its strong collective expertise in wildlife habitats and species, and in the measures needed to halt and reverse the loss of wildlife and to sustain and strengthen the natural capital of Dorset
* Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, which has a key role in prioritising the use of the current European Structural Investment Funds and the Government’s Growth Fund and of the future Shared Prosperity Fund. The Council, which is well represented on the DLEP, will wish to ensure that the rural county gains a strong share of the future Funds, and that the purposes of the Climate and Environment Action Plan fall within the priorities for the use of those funds

15. **Monitoring.** An essential tool for shaping and implementing the Action Plan is the effective monitoring of the major indicators implied by the strategic aims: namely the current and targeted levels of greenhouse gas emissions, the state of habitats and wildlife species, the types and volumes of waste and the extent of reuse and recycling of this waste - both now and throughout the course of the plan period. This monitoring will enable the Council to prioritise its own resources, to progressively assess the impact of the policies and actions that are taken, and to adapt the Action Plan where required. To this end, the Council might engage independent monitoring expertise, in order to underpin public confidence in the outputs.

FoE submission to Dorset Council 8/8/19