

Char Valley Parish Council: Guide to Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Consultation:

We strongly encourage everyone to read and respond to Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Consultation. A huge amount of work has gone into their proposal and the Council deserve congratulation and encouragement – as well as to be reminded of ways that they could do more and position themselves more as pioneers in this area.

CVPC is intending to submit a collective response as a Parish Council, but as many individuals as possible also need to respond. You do not need to have read the whole strategy document nor to respond to every aspect of it – if you are just interested in transport, you can just respond to that topic in the questionnaire.

We have read the responses of Lyme Regis Town Council, Bridport Town Council, West Dorset Friends of the Earth, Planet Purbeck, Dorset National Park Team and Dorset Climate Action Network. You can [see their responses here](#). Some of those responses are far more detailed than ours. Our planned response is comprehensive but pays much more attention to some areas of local interest in a rural parish. You can see our full proposed response here, but these notes should give you suggestions for points you might want to consider when responding yourself.

The consultation **closes on January 20th**. [Here is a link](#) to the plan itself with a link in the first sentence to the actual consultation.

Time Scale: Overall we strongly believe that the target dates which Dorset Council is proposing for becoming carbon neutral (2040 for the Council itself and 2050 for Dorset at large) are not ambitious enough. As DC says on p. 11 of its Strategy Document:

“Small changes in average global temperature will have a very large effect. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has ... advised that ... a global warming of 1.5°C would lead to catastrophic impacts to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth.

Time is short – We (the world) are emitting 55 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year. Scientists estimate that if we emitted no more than 580 billion tonnes, this would give us just a 50% chance of keeping within 1.5°C ... Therefore, 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.”

Given this statement we strongly believe (along with all the organisations listed in para. 3) that Dorset Council should aim to become carbon neutral by 2030. Why would DC demand action is 8-10 years but allow itself 20-30 years?)

There are several online petitions calling for the target dates to be brought forward to 2030 and 2040. Here is one: https://www.change.org/DC_CO2neutral_2030

RENEWABLE ENERGY:

CVPC strongly supports Dorset Council's commitment to extend the Low Carbon Dorset Scheme and congratulates Dorset Council on looking to generate renewable energy to help in becoming a net zero organisation. The commitment to look again at Navitus Bay is also very encouraging.

We believe there is a need to prioritise solar rooftop generation, ground-source and air-source heat pumps (alongside the larger scale renewable energy schemes outlined in the plan). We also support Dorset Council's ambition to build sufficient PV and wind generation on its own land to supply its own needs and its intention to explore the County Farms and other county land to be exemplar test sites for renewables.

BUILDINGS:

CVPC supports Dorset Council's strategy on buildings and agrees with the need to undertake the large-scale retro fitting of the county's housing stock, especially as it will create local jobs and use local skills. Retro fitting social housing should be the number one action with investment to back it up.

We feel the Action Plan can and should be strengthened by rolling out home retrofit plans as soon as possible across all housing, setting out a clear pathway to reaching zero emissions. These plans should be integrated with widespread local energy planning.

We also encourage Dorset Council to consider designating some Dorset towns as "Garden Towns", to allow for efforts and funding to be directed towards creating 'holistically planned new settlements' which fulfil many of the council's other criteria in their Climate and Ecological Emergency strategy.

FOOD & DRINK

Overall, we feel Dorset Council's Food and Drink Strategy is disjointed and piecemeal and its Action Plan does not follow through on the strategy. Details are contained in our response, but the headlines are:

- Farming and agriculture are not well covered because farming issues are split between the 'Food and Drink' topic and the 'Natural Assets' topic.
- DC's proposed policies and actions are all useful in a carbon reduction programme but hardly scratch the surface of the kind of **adaptation and resilience** strategy that is needed to ensure that communities become more self-contained and self-sufficient in the face of climate change, a pandemic or other social and economic disruption.
- We believe that local action being undertaken in and around West Dorset, especially by groups like the Landowners Alliance, Seeding our Future and Char Valley Lifelines, already far exceeds what Dorset Council is planning to do "beyond 2023". DC should facilitate, replicate and resource these initiatives before trying to come up with its own equivalents.

- By setting up a clear strategic framework of ambitious and integrated policies, the Council could establish Dorset as a pioneer (rather than a reluctant follower) in its approach to the climate and ecological emergency. It could pioneer radical plans for a 'Dorset Diet', 'Chemical-Free Dorset' or 'Regenerative Dorset': drives to establish Dorset as the most progressive county in England - creating a blueprint that others can follow and harnessing the energy and expertise of its residents and motivating the public.
- We believe DC needs to pioneer a campaign to educate, support and encourage Dorset farmers to create, manage and restore diverse and wildlife-rich habitats, create and manage dynamic woodlands, healthy soils and clean rivers (by adopting agroforestry and other regenerative agriculture practices) – as well as working with farmers to help them access financial support and ELMS funding and to promote their food and other services.

ECONOMY:

- CVPC supports Dorset Council's Economy Strategy, especially the reference to supporting Dorset becoming a circular economy. We also support and endorse the Low Carbon Dorset strategy. The one fundamental plank of the Economy strategy that we disagree with strongly is the notion that continued economic growth is compatible with living sustainably within planetary boundaries.

We present evidence from a number of sources to argue this and call on Dorset Council to observe the precautionary principle, set aside the overarching goal of economic growth and work to ensure greater fairness in the distribution of jobs, wealth and access to resources for all its residents.

WASTE:

Dorset's waste strategy within the action plan is sound. But, once again, CVPC believes that an opportunity has been missed for Dorset Council to move beyond 'necessary steps' to 'visionary action'. We believe that a so-called 'Circular Dorset' initiative should be established to embed material re-use and redeployment into the Council's procurement processes and to include businesses taking responsibility for the full costs of waste disposal including collection.

WATER:

There are only 4 objectives here covering reduction in demand, reducing waste, resilience to climate change and protecting water supplies.

CVPC strongly supports the overall approach but feels that an important opportunity has been missed to develop a strategy for Dorset's rivers and seawater. The safety and cleanliness of the county's river catchments and bathing water are of vital importance

for tourism and the local economy, for the health and wellbeing of residents, for the regeneration of Dorset's 'Natural Assets' and could be the basis of a popular and attention-getting campaign that brings local people together as they see how our response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency can bring real improvements to the landscape, natural surroundings and our quality of life.

We therefore feel the strategy should be strengthened with the addition of an intention to develop a pioneering partnership programme to enhance and improve river water quality across the county (see our detailed response).

NATURAL ASSETS:

CVPC's response centres around the need for Dorset Council to take clearer action to support local farmers to promote regenerative agriculture that rebuilds the fertility of soil and its capacity to mitigate local flooding. This vital task (which DC can only undertake indirectly with local farmers, but also in collaboration with AONB and Dorset Wildlife Trust and with local groups like the Landworkers Alliance) is hidden away in 'Natural Assets' as: "Communicate to businesses and land owners good practice in terms of protecting and enhancing ecological value, carbon sequestration and climate resilience". This needs to become something like "Pioneer a Revolution in Dorset Farming" which translates into an ongoing campaign to educate, support and encourage Dorset's farmers to create, manage and restore diverse and wildlife-rich habitats, create and manage dynamic woodlands, healthy soils and clean rivers (through the adoption of agroforestry and other regenerative agriculture practices) – as well as to work together to access financial support and ELMS funding and to reach tourists and local customers for their food and other services.

TRANSPORT

The **direct and indirect measures** the council intends are good.

Under **influence and partnership** it would be more effective for the council to lobby for rail improvements in partnership with other bodies (Western Gateway & TravelWatch SouthWest). Redirecting investment from road schemes to low-carbon transport is very important and could include schemes like "Bridport Community Railway & Renewable Corridor" (Zero Carbon Dorset).

CVPC, therefore, broadly supports the Transport strategy and action plan. As a rural parish we would also strongly encourage Dorset Council to:

- adopt land-use policies that reduce the need to travel e.g. promotion of live-work housing units (long used in Devon)
- rejuvenate villages and small towns with improved local services, mass transport and encouragement of micro-businesses (as part of the 'Circular Dorset' proposal set out in our 'Waste' topic response)
- invest in our bus system for rural Dorset (lobby for such from central government).