

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 3 February 2021

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Interim Devon Carbon Plan

Report summary:

Devon County Council have been leading work on the production of a Carbon Plan for the county. This work has been developed with a range of partners and is part of the commitment in the Climate Change Emergency Declaration. The interim Plan is out for consultation and will be finalised following a virtual Citizens Assembly process, incorporating comments from consultees.

The Plan sets out a roadmap for becoming net-zero carbon by 2050 at the latest, with an interim target for a 50% reduction by 2030, below 2010 levels. The Plan emphasises this is intended for everyone in Devon to play a part and make a contribution.

The Plan picks up on the build back better theme and the governments recently published ten point plan for a green industrial revolution. Eight high level objectives have been proposed:

1. Fossil fuels phased out as an energy source
2. Minimise energy consumption
3. Engaged communities acting for resilience and a net-zero carbon Devon
4. Carbon captured and stored from the burning of fuels
5. Minimise fugitive greenhouse gas emissions
6. Resilient local economies with access to green finance
7. A circular use of resources
8. Maximise carbon storage in marine and terrestrial environments

The Plan is supported by a wide range of partners and is underpinned with expertise, good data, enthusiasm and commitment.

Recommendation:

That we feed our comments on the Interim Devon Carbon Plan back as part of the consultation process, and invite a further report on the updated Plan.

Reason for recommendation:

To enable the Council as a partner organisation to comment and influence the development of the Carbon Plan for Devon that aspires to a net-zero position by 2050 at the latest.

Officer: John Golding Strategic Lead – Housing, Health & Environment.

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Corporate Services and COVID-19 Response and Recovery

- Democracy and Transparency
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Policy Co-ordination and Regional Engagement
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

Financial implications:

Although there is no direct financial implications from the recommendation of this report there will be links to the Council's own Strategy and actions but these will have to come forward as separate reports and recommendations if there are direct financial implications.

Legal implications:

The report does not raise any specific legal implications requiring comment.

Equalities impact Medium Impact

Climate change High Impact – a positive impact will be achieved if the actions in the plan are delivered.

Risk: Medium Risk; This represents a commitment for the Council and the risks are around not supporting the thrust of the report on addressing climate change and the consequences.

Links to background information

<https://www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/interimcarbonplan/>

Link to Council Plan:

Priorities (check which apply)

- Outstanding Place and Environment
- Outstanding Homes and Communities
- Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
- Outstanding Council and Council Services

1. Background

- 1.1 The Interim Devon Carbon Plan is out for consultation. Initiated and led by Devon County Council the Plan is the product of multi-agency input, a series of thematic hearings and expert input. It is a Plan with the lofty ambition of decarbonising the county so goes beyond our organisation Climate Change Strategy and requires widespread commitment from all.
- 1.2 The draft Plan is comprehensive and I have reproduced a summary document in **annex 1**. The full version of the Plan can be found on the website:
https://www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/interimcarbonplan/?cat_id=2572
- 1.3 In May 2019, the Devon Climate Emergency partnership formed to declare and respond to the climate and ecological emergency in Devon, including Plymouth and Torbay. Our members include public bodies representing the people of Devon, private sector interests, environmental organisations and academic institutions.
- 1.4 The partnership remains committed to taking a lead in the response to climate change, through our collective action, innovation and influence. We are, therefore, delighted to introduce the consultation draft of the Interim Devon Carbon Plan, produced at our invitation by the Net-Zero Task Force, who have generously volunteered their time and expertise. This Plan shows how we can deliver collectively on our ambition for a net-zero Devon.

- 1.5 The transformational change outlined through this ambitious document will be challenging, but it also highlights many new opportunities for Devon. The Plan requires investments, but the return on investment is clear for the climate, the environment and the health of Devon's citizens, as well as for the many economic opportunities it presents.
- 1.6 Collaboration has been essential to the development of the Plan, with the input of much expertise by Devon's citizens in the Thematic Hearings and in response to the Public Call for Evidence, from which the Plan has taken shape. The ongoing information sharing and collaboration of the partner organisations has also been valuable in informing the Plan. There is recognition of the cross-cutting themes involved in climate change
- 1.7 The continued and widening engagement of Devon's citizens with the Plan and its implementation is vital. Support is needed at all levels of society, as is recognition of its key message: that neither technology nor behaviour change alone is enough, both are needed. Our organisations and infrastructure must be transformed to enable and support citizens and employees to adopt net-zero carbon behaviours and lifestyles. The recent months are testament to our ability to change, when we make changes together.
- 1.8 The Plan puts Devon in a good position to realise the opportunities signposted by the Government's recently announced, 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution'. It is well aligned with the Interim Devon Carbon Plan, which goes further and into more detail.
- 1.9 The statement preceding the consultation says that:

Addressing the climate and ecological emergency is an opportunity to create a fairer, healthier, more resilient and more prosperous society. Those most affected by climate change need more of a say in how we respond, and our actions to mitigate climate change must be aligned with goals for public health improvement, green growth and the reduction of social vulnerability.

Encouraging everyone to be more active by walking and cycling; improving air quality through the electrification of vehicles; insulating our homes to make them warmer; and eating more balanced diets will all improve public health and reduce pressures on the NHS.

There is considerable potential for the transition to clean technologies to create new jobs and skills requirements, improve our national energy security and increase economic prosperity – nationally and locally in Devon. Retrofitting energy efficiency measures into existing housing will reduce fuel poverty and illnesses associated with cold homes and subsequently provide enhanced opportunities for work and study.

Enhancing the ability of habitats along our coast, in our countryside and in our villages, towns and cities to store carbon offers tremendous opportunities to reverse the decline of biodiversity and restore the benefits healthy ecosystems provide. These include reduced flood risk, improved water and air quality, nutritious food, timber and fuel, and accessible greenspace.

The Devon Climate Emergency project aims to create a resilient net-zero carbon Devon – where people and nature thrive.

2. The Interim Carbon Plan

- 2.1 The Plan has been formatted to show the challenge alongside a local context, explores cross-cutting themes, considers economies and resources, energy supply, the built environment, transport, food, land & sea, the actions required and key outcome being sought. The full Plan

contains 363 pages of detail supported by good evidence and understanding of the opportunities, constraints and challenges.

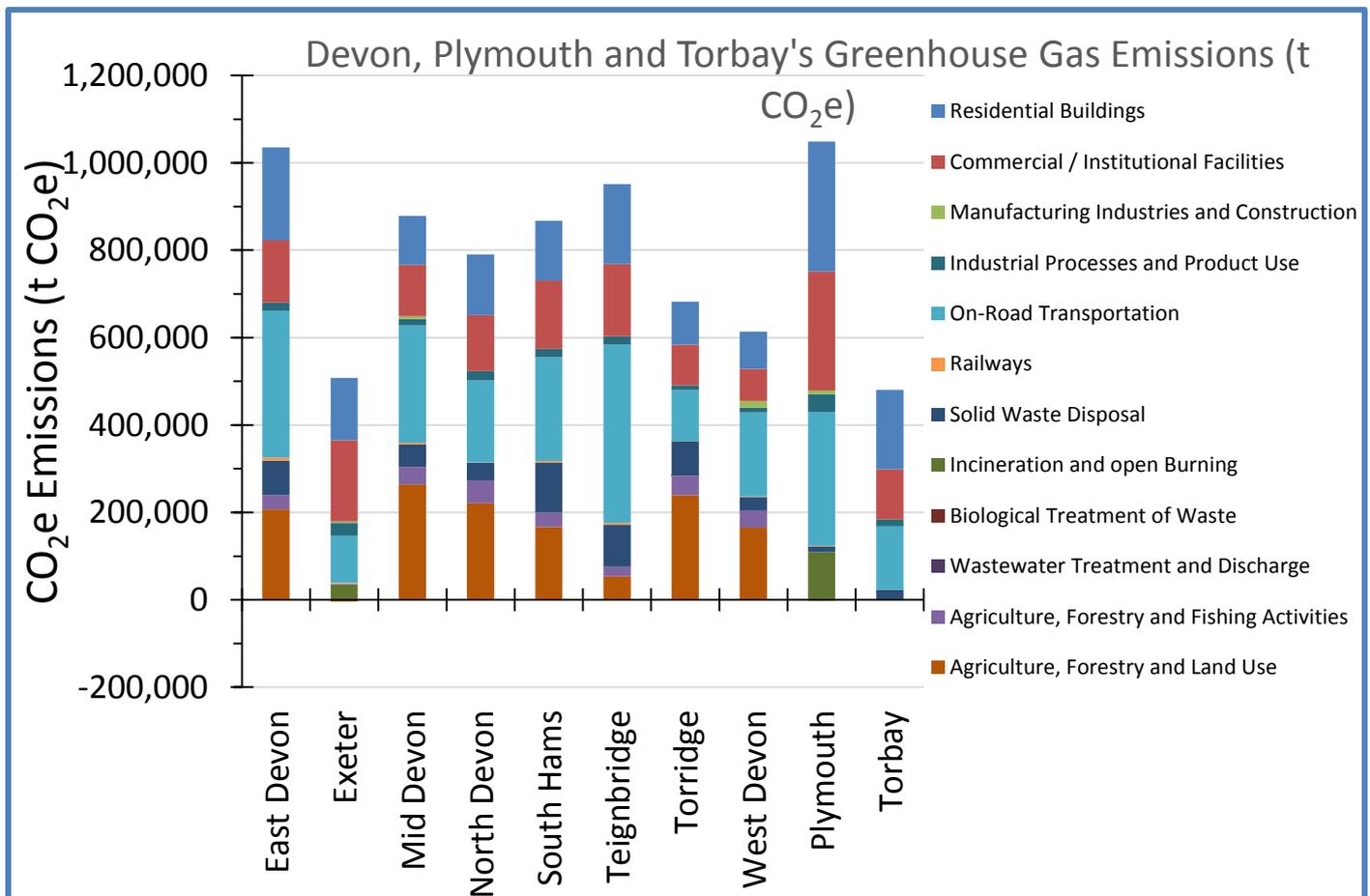
2.2 The Plan has been built around eight objectives:

- Fossil fuels phased out as an energy source;
- Minimise energy consumption;
- Engaged communities acting for resilience and a net-zero carbon Devon;
- Carbon captured and stored from the burning of fuels;
- Minimise fugitive greenhouse gas emissions;
- Resilient local economies and access to green finance;
- A circular use of resources;
- Maximise carbon storage in marine and terrestrial environments.

2.3 The Plan recognises that further analysis is required and costing as many of the resources have not been identified at this point.

2.4 The consultation runs for ten weeks and concludes on 15th February. It recognises that the Citizens Assembly has been delayed due to the pandemic and the proposals for a virtual arrangement, meaning that the Plan will not be finalised until after this consideration.

2.5 The 2018 Devon carbon footprint is shown in the graphic below. This has been produced by the University of Exeter and depicts the scale of the challenge.



3. Comments on the Interim Plan

- 3.1 I am broadly content with the draft Interim Devon Carbon Plan and have already had the opportunity to input into this iteration of the interim draft. This is an impressive piece of work and a great starting point to deliver an ambitious programme of activities designed to reduce the carbon footprint of the entire county. It recognises that transformational change is required and a wide range of technological and behaviour changes are required to achieve the goal. It makes a compelling and convincing case for the need for change.
- 3.2 The actions need to be identified in sufficient detail to provide confidence in the Plan actually delivering its ambitions. There is a lack of detail that must be included in the final version. Accepting that the Plan will be further developed following the Citizens Assembly process, it would be good to see estimates of the level of reduction/impact that each of the themes have on the overall carbon footprint.
- 3.3 There could be more detail on the challenge around changes required to farming practice and agriculture.
- 3.4 More could be said on the contribution we must make as individuals with lifestyle changes and how tourists and visitors to Devon need to support the Plans objectives.
- 3.5 The Plan has not been costed and relies heavily on government support and developing technologies. The Plan recognises this and clearly states that this is the case. I like the references to what needs to happen and key outcomes. There are nice graphics and the presentation is professional and easy to read.
- 3.6 Greater emphasis on the role of planning and development management, with a stronger position around refusing development applications that do not meet the aspirations of the Plan. It is important that our ambitions for a zero carbon west end are reflected in the Plan and replicated in other developments across the county.
- 3.7 The Portfolio Holder for Climate Action would also like to see a website like the Leeds By Example site and for us to include a visible dashboard of key performance indicators that demonstrate progress towards the various targets and actions being adopted. We have admired the Leeds website for some time and would like to create something similar at a County or district level.

<https://www.leedsbyexample.co.uk/>

Transport improvements will require huge investment and support from national government, which is why there is limited detail in the Plan. We need to liaise with other district councils and partners to lobby for this, as on our own we will have zero influence. We should also liaise with other District Councils to lobby government to subsidise public transport (currently only in London). Similarly, we need to influence national government to kick-start building energy efficient housing. We all know this, and the government policy regarding retrofitting will not tackle the problem.

- 3.8 Assistant Portfolio Holder comments are that the Plan doesn't go far enough and has no detail. For example transport, it talks about improved public transport and travelling less, but how is this going to be achieved without massive infrastructure investment? Also about food and diet, it just feels wishy washy and could have been produced a year ago, not after consultations and conversations with experts. It needs hard hitting information about what we as consumers could do better to help. A feeling of everybody's in it together and doing their bit could be inspiring, especially in these Covid-19 times. There is a suggestion that the Don't let Devon go to waste campaign needs a rebrand as I think the impact is minimal now - we are all used to it. It needs to be far more hard hitting. We can't have much impact on buildings while we still let planners get away with concrete boxes, and don't plan infrastructure properly to allow new developments to be connected to public transport routes.

- 3.9 I would like to see more prominence of the Doughnut Economic Model. I know that County colleagues are exploring this and impressed with how it sits so well with climate change thinking and decision making.
- 3.10 We will have further opportunities to influence the Devon Carbon Plan as it develops. It will require a significant commitment from us and builds on our organisational Climate Change Strategy, going beyond our existing commitments to decarbonise our own activities and those of our partners and contractors. We will continue to work as a key partner within the governance structure proposed and contribute towards the work of refining, monitoring and refreshing the Plan. The roadmap approach will inevitably involve some delays and likely a diversion or two along the way.
- 3.11 We can review our own Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan once the Devon Plan is published to ensure that they are aligned and complimentary.