

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 5 January 2022

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Responding to the resolutions of the Devon Climate Assembly

Report summary:

This report outlines the input into the draft Devon Carbon Plan that has been proposed through the Devon Citizens Assembly process. All signatories to the Devon Climate Emergency Declaration have been invited to consider and comment on the resolutions put forward by the Citizens or more correctly the Devon Climate Assembly prior to a further round of public consultation.

The Devon Climate Assembly was organised by Involve a charity that specialises in public consultation on social policy. A rigorous process of selecting, training and facilitating participant's debate, and producing a series of resolutions was undertaken by Involve. So we now have some valuable further public input into the planning process for the Devon Carbon Plan.

I would suggest that we welcome the resolutions presented by the Climate Assembly and work collectively with the Devon Climate Change Partnership to incorporate them into the revised and updated version of the Devon Carbon Plan.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

It is recommended that we feed back our observations on the Devon Climate Assembly resolutions and actions proposed based on the observations contained in this report.

Cabinet is invited to comment on the actions proposed in the annex to the report.

Reason for recommendation:

It is recommended that partner organisations of the Devon Climate Assembly share the draft actions with members and senior representatives and provide feedback to the Devon Climate Emergency secretariat by 27 January 2022.

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

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications

- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change High Impact

Risk: High Risk; The risks occur by not embracing actions that are designed to reduce Green House Gas emissions in the county.

Links to background information Draft Devon Carbon Plan [Home – Devon Climate Emergency](#)

Link to Council Plan

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
 - A greener East Devon
 - A resilient economy
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1. Background

- 1.1 This paper introduces draft actions to add to the interim Devon Carbon Plan in response to the Devon Climate Assembly process. It seeks feedback from the organisations who are part of the Devon Climate Emergency (DCE) Partnership, in particular senior representatives and Local Authority members, on those actions prior to their public consultation in March 2022.
- 1.2 The citizen's assembly process was undertaken by Involve who were commissioned by DCC on behalf of the partnership. Involve are a charity specialising in complex consultations and are dedicated to ensuring that the public influence public policy putting people at the heart of decision making.
- 1.3 The **Devon Carbon Plan** will be a comprehensive set of proposals that will be applicable across the whole county and will sit with our **Climate Change Strategy**, which is primarily our organisational plan for achieving a reduction in our carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions, albeit does extend to partners, contractors and our communities.

2. The Devon Climate Assembly

- 2.1 The [Devon Climate Assembly, a 70-strong representative panel of Devon's residents](#) met in June and July this year for 25 hours to deliberate on three big issues for reaching net-zero that were not resolved in the Interim Devon Carbon Plan (IDCP). These were:
 1. What should be the role of onshore wind in the Devon renewable energy strategy?
 2. What needs to be done to encourage less car use in Devon?
 3. What would be the best ways of encouraging, or requiring, people to retrofit their homes, properties or business premises to reduce carbon emissions?
- 2.2 The Assembly generated recommendations to feed into the Devon Carbon Plan. [A report on the conclusions of the Assembly members](#) was presented to the DCE partnership in October.

3. Carbon Plan process

3.1 The [IDCP is online](#) and was subject to public consultation in December 2020. Partners have been implementing the IDCP alongside the Assembly proceedings. The DCE partners are now developing actions that respond to the resolutions of the citizens' assembly, in preparation for their public consultation in March 2022. Further amendments to the actions will be made as required, and incorporated into the Final Devon Carbon Plan. Figure 1 illustrates the process.

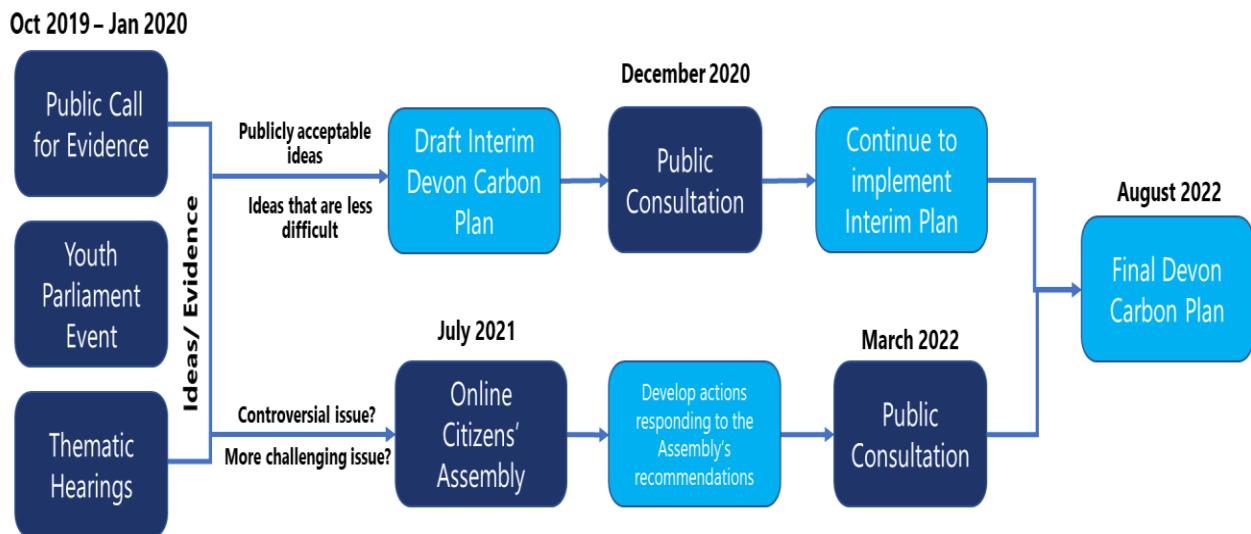


Figure 1. The Carbon Plan Process

4. Consultation with partners to date

- 4.1 Initially the DCE secretariat reviewed the resolutions and conditions developed by the Assembly and developed a first draft of actions. The draft actions were cross referenced with the IDCP, to avoid duplication where there were already actions which would fulfil the recommendations of the Assembly.
- 4.1 The Devon Climate Emergency Tactical Group had 5 weeks (8/10/21 - 12/11/21) to comment on the draft actions by collecting feedback from officers within their organisations. The organisations which responded at this stage were:
- Devon County Council
 - Torbay Council
 - Devon Wildlife Trust
 - East Devon District Council
 - Plymouth Council (will not offer comments on the plan at this stage)
 - The Devon Landscape Policy Officers Group
 - The Devon and Cornwall Planning Policy Officers Group

5. Draft actions

- 5.1 The latest draft of the actions responding to the Devon Climate Assembly can be found in the Annex to this report.
- 5.2 I would suggest that we generally welcome this contribution to the climate change debate and recognise this piece of work as a crucial element in finalising the Devon Carbon Plan.
- 5.3 Organisations committed to the Devon Climate Emergency declaration cannot achieve zero carbon targets alone and need individual and community 'buy in' to achieve behaviour change at scale.

- 5.4 The Citizens Assembly were put through a rigorous process, taking an academic approach with outputs that provide added value to the Devon Carbon Plan.
- 5.5 Only 70 participants albeit carefully selected representatives of Devon demography, ethnicity, geography etc.
- 5.6 The Citizens Assembly were given a narrow focus on three issues (listed above).
- 5.7 The process necessarily involved a lot of learning to enable informed feedback. So a considerable amount of time was spent getting participants to a point where they could provide meaningful opinions.
- 5.8 There is an important section of the report on messages to organisations. In addition to the resolutions, conditions and supporting recommendations, in the final meeting of the Assembly members had an opportunity to 'step back' from the specific questions they had been tasked with addressing and consider, in light of all they had heard and all they knew, what final overarching messages they wanted to send to the Devon Climate Emergency Partnership. The key themes that members focused on were the need for:
- Wider communication and information about the climate emergency
 - Greater community involvement and engagement
 - Urgent action
 - Ambition locally
 - Strong leadership
 - Accountability to the public
 - Central government to play an enabling role
- 5.9 For me there were no surprises or stretch targets being imposed. I was expecting a more radical response. It was however a response that was not overly emotive, balanced, and reasonable. It is good that it appears to endorse the direction of travel for the Devon Carbon Plan.
- 5.10 In producing our EDDC Climate Change Strategy we did not undertake public consultation before adoption. We have run a series of climate conversations after adoption through our Thelma Hulbert Gallery and Climate Change Officer and the feedback has been very positive in relation to our strategy and action plan. Whilst the Citizens Assembly is no substitute for consultation on our own strategy, we did say at the time that DCC were planning a comprehensive consultation process and had the resources to run an exercise beyond our ability and expertise.
- 5.11 I have received some initial feedback from the Portfolio Holder and others that I will feed back into the process.

Comments as follows re transport and housing:

Transport

(P.9) Condition 3.1 comments are 'update this goal to: our streets are safe for all and using active, shared and public transport is efficient and affordable.'

- we cannot make public transport affordable
- all we can do is lobby (as this is not within our remit)
- government needs to subsidise public transport (as they do in other European countries)
- subsidies could be a game changer

Resolution 4

(P.10) about ‘financial sticks’ - agree that we should not pursue this, as we need efficient, affordable and reliable public transport FIRST. So financial sticks are not appropriate at this time.

Housing

Encouraging people or *requiring* them to retrofit (see condition 3.2 regarding affordability)

(P.20) Condition 5.3 ‘that Councils promote widely the opportunity to benefit from reductions in council tax and business rates by increasing the energy efficiency of your property’

- good in theory but this will penalise the very people we need to help: affordability is key
- some businesses are already struggling due to the pandemic, so this would be an additional tax which may tip them over the edge
- similarly, not all residents have the money available to retrofit their properties
- long term, generous, government funding is what is required.

6. Next steps

6.1 The Devon Climate Emergency secretariat now seeks feedback from senior representatives and Local Authority members of the Devon Climate Emergency Partnership, prior to public consultation in March 2022. Unless there is feedback which demands otherwise, preparations for the public consultation will continue as follows:

- **23/11/2021 – 27/01/2022** Individual local authorities and partner organisations consult with their members and senior staff on the draft actions
- **13/01/2022 – 17/02/2022** Secretariat and Tactical Group update actions following consultation with councillors and senior representatives
- **17/02/2022 – 24/02/2022** Tactical Group sign off the actions and supporting texts and recommends these to the Response Group for public consultation
- **24/02/2022 - 03/03/2022** Response Group sign off the texts for public consultation
- **17/03/2022 – 14/04/2022** Consult public on the actions and supporting texts
- **14/4/2022 - 12/05/2022** Secretariat process responses from the consultation to produce consultation report

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations in this report. However the financial resources required to meet the carbon reduction actions are significant and beyond the resources available to a district council. No budget is being requested in this paper.

Legal implications:

It is within the power of the Cabinet to respond on behalf of the Council to this request. It is not considered that there are any other legal implications requiring specific comment.