

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 1st March 2023

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Plant Based Treaty

Report summary:

We have been invited to sign up to the Plant Based Treaty as a way of contributing towards the reduction in carbon production and combatting climate change. It champions a change in diets and agricultural and food production practices. Radical change is required and the Treaty does set out some controversial commitments, which will undoubtedly not appeal to everyone. That said we have recognised in our Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan as well the Devon Carbon Plan that we will encourage and enable a change towards a more plant based diet.

There are elements of the Treaty that we are not able to influence or implement, however, the principles are consistent with our recognition of the need to facilitate a higher proportion of plant food in our diets.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That the Council supports the principles contained in the Plant Based Treaty, and works towards signing up to the Treaty and in doing so refers the issue to the Overview Committee to assess the implications on food producers, planning policy, and other considerations.

Reason for recommendation:

To progress an element of our climate change strategy and contribute towards our net zero carbon ambitions and support our climate change agenda.

Officer: John Golding Director- 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 Medium Impact

This will be considered at the Overview Committee stage.

Climate change High Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; Not addressing this issue will likely mean we do not meet our climate change ambitions.

Links to background information [The Plant Based Treaty - Plant Based Treaty](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

Better homes and communities for all

A greener East Devon

A resilient economy

1. Plant Based Treaty

1.1 We have been invited to sign up to and endorse the Plant Based Treaty as a way of reducing the carbon impact of our dietary habits, methods of food production, and working towards combating climate change. A number of organisations, businesses and individuals have pledged their support for the Treaty.

1.2 I have attached a copy of the Plant Based Treaty in **annex 1**. It does challenge existing agricultural and other food production practices and dietary habits, but it is widely recognised and accepted that if we are to make progress against climate change we must make changes to our diets.

[The Plant Based Treaty - Plant Based Treaty](#)

1.3 Behaviour change and moving to a plant based diet is an ambition in our approach to addressing climate change. In the Devon Climate Emergency Declaration we committed to amongst other things - Changing our dietary patterns and reducing food waste.

1.4 Our climate change action plan under objective 7 (EDDC will continue to provide advice to the community about improving their resilience to a changing climate, and how they can prepare for and respond to extreme weather) says that:

We will also educate on the need for food and water security, changes required to agriculture and diet.

Promote local produce with low 'food miles' and educate on dietary and nutritional changes needed to ensure food security.

1.5 So recognition of the need for dietary change is entirely consistent with our Climate Change Strategy and the Devon Carbon Plan. For example the Devon Carbon Plan states - Healthy food choices are often the better choice for GHG emissions. Following the government's Eatwell Guide, which reduces the animal products we eat and increases consumption of vegetables, fruits, nuts and wholegrains, has a 32% lower environmental footprint in comparison to the typical UK diet. It also states that we will promote a healthy and sustainably-produced diet, following the government's Eatwell Guide.

2. The campaign for the Plant Based Treaty

- 2.1 As part of the campaign to move towards a plant based diet the campaigners cite the UN Secretary-General António Guterres' who described the release of the IPCC sixth assessment as a 'code red' for humanity and our last chance to avoid catastrophic climate breakdown. Greenhouse gases must be cut in a rapid and sustained manner to avoid temperatures rising above 1.5C. According to the 2021 UN Global Methane Assessment, methane, of which a third comes from animal agriculture, must be cut by 45% by 2030.
- 2.2 The Plant Based Treaty is designed to put food systems at the forefront of combating the climate crisis. Modelled on the popular Fossil Fuel Treaty, the treaty aims to halt the widespread degradation of critical ecosystems caused by animal farming and promote a shift towards healthier, sustainable plant-based diets.
- 2.3 We are informed that more than 240 councillors and 22 MPs back the treaty, along with numerous IPCC scientists. More than 2,000 groups and businesses have signed the Treaty, including British food giant Linda McCartney Foods, energy firm Ecotricity, The Climate Emergency Institute, Ocean Preservation Society, Fridays For Future Digital, and chapters of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth.
- 2.4 Climate damaging greenhouse gases must be tackled both urgently and with equal measure. Plant-based and soft energy solutions that can mitigate this impending disaster are within our grasp — we just need to implement them. The Paris Agreement leaves it to countries, businesses and individuals to make changes. However, transformative changes to our food system have been largely ignored and at times even resisted at the government level.
- 2.5 The overwhelming scientific evidence makes clear the significant impact of animal agriculture on our planetary health and points to the need for a plant-based food revolution as an essential solution. According to prominent scientists from a range of academic and research institutions, it will be impossible for any government (or organisation) to meet the goals set under the Paris Agreement without a major shift towards plant-based diets, even if current fossil fuel emissions are completely halted.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications identified at this stage.

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications requiring comment.