

Initial Summary of the Consultation on the Interim Devon Carbon Plan

1. Summary

The consultation responses give a clear message that there is strong public support for meaningful action on climate change in Devon and for implementing the Interim Devon Carbon Plan.

2. Consultation purpose

The purpose of the consultation was to:

- Provide an opportunity for the public to feedback on the content of the Interim Devon Carbon Plan, including if any important actions have been omitted
- Understand the target year for achieving net-zero which has the most public support
- Check if the public agree with the actions which have been identified as priorities
- Better understand the issues the public identify as priorities for discussion at the upcoming Citizens' Assembly
- Record existing projects and organisational strategies in Devon which are aligned with the Plan
- Gather feedback on the proposed governance structure for overseeing the delivery of the actions within the Plan
- Compile expressions of interest for participating in the future governance of the Plan

3. Promotion

Timing

The consultation for the Interim Carbon Plan was open from the 7th December 2020 through to the 15th February 2021.

The Plan's Availability

The Plan was available online as accessible and searchable web pages and also downloadable PDF chapters. Hard copies were initially intended to be available via libraries but due to the third COVID lockdown this was not possible and instead were available via a phone call to the Devon County Council Customer Service Centre.

Promotion Methods

The consultation was promoted widely on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter accounts from the Devon Climate Emergency as well the social media accounts of the 27 partner organisations. Paid advertising was used on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube. Organisations beyond the partnership were reached out to on social media that would have a particular interest, such as farming organisations.

The opportunity was marketed in partner newsletters and news releases were issued. Every town and parish council and secondary school received a hard copy set of posters to display in their communities as they felt appropriate.

A series of nine webinars targeted on each of the themes of the Plan as well as different audiences (members, individuals, organisations and communities) ran throughout the consultation period. Attendance at each of these ranged from 50 to over 100. Recordings are [available online](#).

The Questionnaires

Initially, respondents were asked to complete an online questionnaire which was designed to allow a quick or a long response depending upon the appetite of the respondent. We received feedback that the questionnaire was not easy to navigate and so this was changed to two separate questionnaires - one that took 45 minutes and one that took 10 minutes to complete. Offline audiences that had requested a hard copy of the Plan were posted a hard copy of the questionnaire also with a Freepost return envelope.

Adaptation

The final weeks of the public engagement strategy was monitored and adjusted in response to evidence about who and how people were being reached. Younger audiences were under-represented despite targeted paid adverts on YouTube and Instagram, and an attempt at TikTok content. We reached out to social media influencers, Fridays for Future, the Devon Youth Parliament and the Devon Explorer Scouts Facebook group to help with engagement.

The urban areas of Plymouth and Torbay were underrepresented in the submissions during the campaign and so paid advertising on social media targeting residents of these areas with bespoke messaging was implemented.

To help with social media promotion and to enable people to understand the main objectives of the Plan quickly, an 'Eight Point Plan' reflecting was developed to engage social media audiences through a short video.

4. Responses received

How many?

There were 1,321 responses, which is more than the number of responses to the Public Call for Evidence in autumn 2019 (893 responses).

The responses were received in the following ways:

- 531 responses to the 45-minute questionnaire
- 723 responses to the 10-minute questionnaire
- 63 responses by email
- 5 responses via the paper version

We know from website analytics that 20% of people who landed on the webpage for the 45-minute questionnaire completed it, and 40% of people who landed on the webpage for the 10-minute questionnaire completed it. This is an excellent 'conversion rate' – anything above 5% is generally considered very successful from marketing campaigns.

Who from?

Responses were received from individuals and a variety of organisation types and sizes. Organisations which responded include:

- Political parties
- Councils – including County, District and Town and Parish
- A range of environmental groups, both place-based e.g. Sustainable Crediton and issue based, e.g. Exeter Cycling Campaign
- Professional bodies
- Businesses
- Educational institutions

The most responses were received from individuals over 65+ (32%), see Figure 1. Younger age groups were underrepresented despite the targeted, paid social media advertising to these age groups.

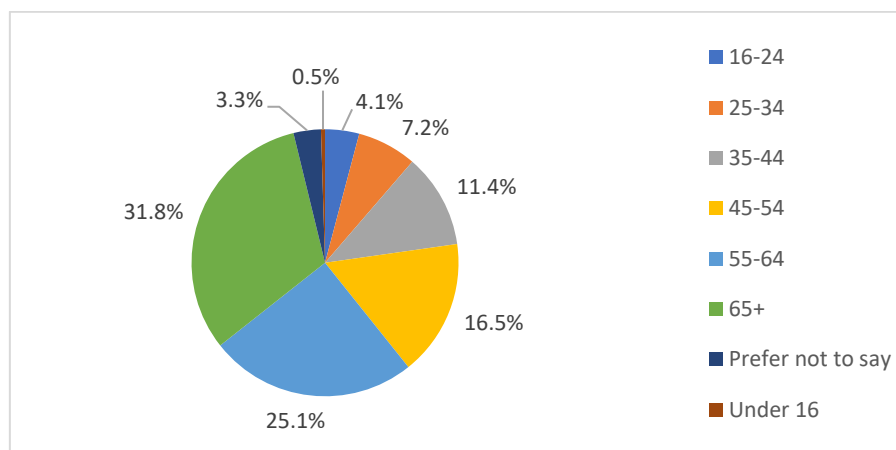


Figure 1. Pie chart showing the proportion of responses from each age group

Female respondents slightly outnumbered males in all age categories, except 65+. Overall, 51% of respondents were female, 44% male and the remainder ‘other’ or ‘preferred not to say’. The slightly higher percentage of female respondents is reflective of Devon’s population as a whole.

Where from?

Responses were received from all local authority areas in Devon. Most areas submitted a similar proportion of the total responses that would be expected in relation to their population size, however some areas were under-represented in comparison to their population size, particularly Plymouth. South Hams, Teignbridge and Dartmoor had higher response rates than would be expected based on their population. See Table 1.

District, Unitary and National Park Authority	East Devon	Exeter	Mid Devon	North Devon	Plymouth	South Hams	Teignbridge	Torbay	Torridge	West Devon	Dartmoor	Exmoor
% of Total Population	12%	11%	7%	8%	21%	7%	11%	11%	6%	5%	3%	1%
Count of responses by area	109	128	95	124	59	151	199	113	90	92	106	24
Percentage of responses by area	9%	10%	8%	10%	5%	20%	16%	9%	7%	7%	9%	2%

Table 1. Responses to the question: In which area of Devon do you live or is your organisation based?

5. Overall support for the plan

Seventy-six percent of respondents “broadly support the plan”. Broad support for the plan was consistent across age groups and the area of Devon respondents were based in (Table 2).

Response options	Response Percentage
I broadly support the plan	76 %
I don't support the plan	6%
I support some of the actions but not others	18%

Table 2. What is your overall view of the Interim Devon Carbon Plan?

Some respondents were concerned by the length of the consultation document which will have deterred some people from engaging with it, whilst others commented they were pleased with how comprehensive it is.

6. Date for achieving net-zero

The public wish to see Devon become net-zero as soon as possible: 51% of respondents supported 2030 as the date to achieve net-zero. The comments received alongside these answers reflect that the public recognise that achieving net-zero by 2030 will be highly challenging, but that they see the urgency of responding to climate change (Table 3).

Net-Zero Year	Response Percentage
2025	1 %
2030	51%
2035	1%
2040	26%
2050	13%
Other	9%

Table 3. Dates supported for reaching net-zero

7. Issues for the Citizens’ Assembly

The draft Interim Devon Carbon Plan proposed six controversial issues for potential deliberation at the Citizens’ Assembly later in 2021. The consultation asked respondents which three issues they would prioritise if the Assembly does not have time to deliberate all six.

Remarkably there was a fairly even spread of responses to which issues should be prioritised. The issue of ruminant livestock related emissions and diet was most often chosen as a priority, but only marginally (Table 4).

Issue for the Citizens’ Assembly	Percentage of responses that would prioritise this issue
How should Devon’s landscapes evolve in ways that positively support achieving net-zero and that are beneficial to their special qualities?	17%
The Committee on Climate Change scenarios for achieving net-zero require a 20% reduction in beef, lamb and dairy consumption nationally. What does this mean for Devon?	18%
What is the role of reducing road capacity in reducing traffic, and is it appropriate for Devon?	17%
To what extent should financial incentives and legislation be used to accelerate the retrofitting of buildings with energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies?	16%
What is the role of onshore wind energy in the Devon Renewable Energy Strategy? How can tensions between the support for onshore wind energy in theory and practice be reduced?	16%
To what extent would the use of financial mechanisms be acceptable to Devon’s citizens to help discourage activities that generate emissions and to fund emissions reduction?	16%

Table 4. Which three issues would you prioritise for the Citizens’ Assembly to deliberate?

Respondents were also able to indicate if they believed an action is controversial enough to warrant discussion at the Citizens’ Assembly. Whilst no single action received a significant number of responses, the following actions were most often raised as needing to go to the assembly (the number in brackets indicates the number of respondents who said it should go to the assembly):

- Consider the potential role and feasibility of a hydrogen industrial cluster based around port and fuel storage facilities. (59)

- Provide the South West Mutual with start-up funding. (57)
- Involve communities in an update to the landscape strategies and guidelines within Devon's Landscape Character Assessment to plan positively for change arising from the Net- Zero challenge. (43)
- Establish a partnership to look at the feasibility in Devon of using biomethane for electricity generation, gas grid injection and vehicle fuel. (41)
- Explore opportunities to use the carbon offset market to fund the retrofit of domestic and commercial buildings (41)
- Some people wanted to discuss the date for achieving net-zero at the Citizens' Assembly

None of these identified actions represent more than 5% of the total number of responses.

8. Next steps

A more detailed report summarising the responses to each consultation question will be prepared for the Task Force in April, which the partners will be able to view in May. This will inform amendments to be made to the Draft Interim Devon Carbon Plan, which the Task Force will lead on.

A subsequent draft will be available for partners' comment during June.

The Tactical Group will lead on developing an ambition for net-zero that could be palatable to all of the organisations in the Devon Climate Emergency partnership and bring this to the Response Group in due course.

9. Conclusion

A good level of response to the consultation was achieved. Initial analysis shows strong support across Devon for early action on climate change and that the consultation document was well received. The consultation suggests that all the issues signposted by the Draft Interim Devon Carbon Plan for consideration at the citizens' assembly were considered to be of almost equal importance for deliberation by respondents.