

Summary Report on the Public Consultation of the Interim Devon Carbon Plan

June 2021



1. Background to this Report

In May 2019, a partnership formed to respond to the climate and ecological emergency in Devon (including the areas of Plymouth and Torbay). The partnership includes public bodies, private sector interests, environmental organisations and academic institutions.

The Devon Climate Emergency partners invited a Net-Zero Task Force of 15 specialists to create a Devon Carbon Plan that would recommend a pathway to net-zero emissions informed by a Citizens' Assembly.

The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the Citizens' Assembly planned for summer 2020, so to prevent delay an *Interim* Carbon Plan has been prepared.

The Interim Plan contains actions which are less difficult to implement and are considered to be more publicly acceptable by the Devon Climate Emergency partners.

The issues for achieving net-zero in Devon that are considered to be more controversial and challenging are highlighted in the Interim Plan but actions to resolve them have not been included. Instead, these issues are proposed to be debated by the Citizens' Assembly in summer 2021.

The public consultation was a further chance for citizens to have their say on how Devon should respond to the climate and ecological emergencies.

Thank you to everyone who responded. This is an incredibly important time for the future of Devon and it is great that we have had such high-levels of engagement.

This Report is brief summary of the findings of the consultation. For an in-depth analysis you can view the full consultation report on the Devon Climate Emergency website.

2. Consultation Purpose

The consultation aimed to:

- Get public feedback on the Interim Devon Carbon Plan, including if any important actions have been missed;
- Understand the public's ambition for achieving net-zero;
- Check if the public agree with the Plan's priority actions;
- Understand the issues the public prioritise for discussion at the Citizens' Assembly;
- Record projects and organisations in Devon with strategies that align with the Plan;
- Get feedback on the proposed governance structure for overseeing the delivery of the Plan; and
- Find out who is interested in participating in the future governance of the Plan.

3. Summary of Findings

Responses were received from 1,322 individuals and organisations. They were received from all local authority areas in Devon and across all age ranges. However, responses from Plymouth and from younger residents of Devon are underrepresented, despite targeted communications.

The responses to the public consultation on the Interim Devon Carbon Plan are clear there is strong public support for action on climate change in Devon. Three-quarters (76%) of respondents “broadly support the Plan”.

The public wish to see Devon become net-zero carbon as soon as possible but recognise that doing so is very challenging.

The consultation results show strong support (at least 81% of respondents) for the Key Outcomes and Priority Actions presented in each section of the Interim Devon Carbon Plan.

Some respondents recommended for the next iteration of the Plan to be more concise, use plain English and slim-down the number of priority actions to focus on those that will make most difference to reducing emissions quickly. Additionally there was a call for a better link between the actions and the carbon reduction they will help achieve.

The six issues proposed for potential consideration by the Citizens’ Assembly were of almost equal priority to respondents and therefore the Net-Zero Task Force will endeavour to design the Assembly so that as many as possible can be considered in the depth required to provide sound and useful recommendations to the Devon Climate Emergency partners. The six issues are:

1. **How should Devon’s landscapes evolve** in ways that positively support achieving net-zero and are beneficial to their special qualities?
2. **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?
3. **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?
4. **To what extent should financial incentives and legislation be used to accelerate the retrofitting of buildings** with energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies?
5. **What is the role of reducing road capacity in reducing traffic**, and is it appropriate for Devon?
6. 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? Should Devon adopt and promote a red meat and dairy consumption target?**

Respondents were able to rate the importance of all 159 actions in the Interim Devon Carbon Plan from “Not at all important” to “Very high importance”, as well as indicating if each should be discussed by the Citizens’ Assembly. No more than 20% of responses to any one action said it should be considered by the Citizens’ Assembly, which was at most 58 people. This represents 4% of the total responses to the questionnaire and therefore it is concluded that no additional themes need to be considered by the Citizens’ Assembly.

On average, each action was rated as at least “Medium importance” by 87% of respondents. This shows the high support for actions in the Plan. However, respondents felt that some actions were of much greater importance than others. The percentage of respondents who rated an action as being of “Very high importance” ranged from 19% to 70%, depending on the action.

Respondents were asked about existing community projects linked to one or more of the actions highlighted in the Plan. In total, 264 different projects were identified by respondents. These will be collated into a public directory to facilitate networking between projects and greater public participation.

When asked about existing organisational strategies, linked to one or more of the actions highlighted in the Plan, 67 respondents identified strategies within their organisations. This will help to inform future opportunities for collaboration and outreach.

Respondents to the consultation were asked to comment on a proposed structure for overseeing the delivery of the actions within the Plan. Whilst more people thought the proposal for overseeing the delivery of the Plan would work than not, a greater percentage of people didn’t know either way. Comments made explaining the answers given emphasised concerns about diverse representation, the ability for the groups to act with speed, the need for national support and resources, as well as the delivery of the Plan having clear, quantified milestones.

When asked if a representative from their organisation saw value in getting involved in overseeing the delivery of the Plan 95 respondents said yes. This included representation from a wide range of organisations with expertise ranging from community engagement to civil engineering.

Some respondents provided additional comment on the approach to monitoring the Plan, highlighting the importance of a public online record of progress towards key indicators and suggested indicators.

Overall, the consultation shows strong support for the actions in the Interim Devon Carbon Plan and the potential to further prioritise actions. Respondents want to see rapid and significant progress on actions in the following decade. We are not starting from scratch; the consultation identified organisations and community groups in Devon already engaged in adopting strategies and acting locally on climate change, but we must accelerate and expand this action together. Some respondents are also interested to be involved in overseeing the delivery of the Plan. In short there is the support and will to achieve net-zero in Devon.

4. Next Steps

Your responses will be used to redraft the Interim Devon Carbon Plan for publication in autumn 2021.

The recommendations from the Citizens’ Assembly will be also be published in the autumn. These will be considered by the Net-Zero Task Force and the Devon Climate Emergency partners to complete the Plan, following which there will be a further consultation opportunity in spring 2022.

In the meantime, the Devon Climate Emergency partners are taking action. You can keep up to date on the website at www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/taking-action, join our mailing list at www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/join and follow our social media channels.