

INTRODUCTION



Over recent years, scientific consensus has been building on the causes and scale of climate change. It now recognises that there is a rise in global temperatures caused by manmade sources of greenhouse gases. Recent reports note that we must act swiftly to cut emissions if we are to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, caused by global temperatures rising above 1.5 degrees. In addition, public concern about climate change and the future impact it may have on our communities, and furthermore the ecosystems upon which we rely, is rising. There is an urgent need to take decisive action in the limited time we have left to make a difference.

“Right now, we are facing a man-made disaster of global scale. Our greatest threat in thousands of years... Climate Change”

Sir David Attenborough

This is a national and global issue. However, Dorset will need to play our part. In response, Dorset Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency and have committed to becoming a carbon-neutral Council by 2040, and work with organisations and residents to help Dorset become a carbon-neutral County by 2050.

This is a mammoth task and the scale of the challenge should not be underestimated. It will require enormous investment to drive the fundamental changes required. Dorset Council recognises it has a key role to play in facilitating this change but, if we are to make this a reality, organisations and individuals will all have to play their part and work together to collaborate, share best practice, and take decisive action.

The average Dorset residents' carbon footprint is 4.6 tonnes of CO₂e per year, some of the lowest in the region. However, this will need to reduce to near zero by 2050, if not sooner. Therefore, we all need to think about how we travel, use energy, and water, and how we create waste and what we eat to achieve a carbon-neutral future.

The benefits of our actions will be great. We can stimulate Dorset's local economy through growth in green jobs and buying local goods and services. In addition, we can work towards significantly improving our health and wellbeing as a result of more active travel, better diets, cleaner air, a greater connection with the natural world, and healthier, more affordable homes. This is as well as being more connected and vibrant local communities.

We are not starting from scratch. All the former Councils, which now form Dorset Council, had been working for many years to tackle climate change, improve the resilience of communities, and protect and enhance the biodiversity in Dorset in partnership with many organisations and communities. However, we recognise that we need a huge step-change in the scale.

This strategy builds upon this work and sets out some of the key challenges and issues we face and some of the important areas where we need to act. There is much we still do not know and changes in government policy and technology over the coming years will greatly affect what we all do. Therefore, this document needs to be dynamic and regularly reviewed. However, it is an initial road map that sets the direction and urgency of travel. With this strategy, we will consult residents, organisations, and partners, in order to further develop our plans and initiatives to achieve a carbon neutral Dorset.