

**Full Council
15 April 2021**

Questions and Statements submitted for the Public Participation Period

Question 1 - submitted by Kathryn Haskins, Director, Alexandra Hotel and Restaurant

I felt I must write regarding the planned beach works and perhaps this could be passed to the Chairman of Dorset Council and raised at the full council meeting.

Why does Dorset Council find it necessary to re-profile Lyme Regis' main beach during what we all hope will be a busy tourist period. The beach was closed for days on end in June last year whilst re-profiling and dredging was undertaken, the dredging saw sand being pumped by huge machinery for weeks on end and making the beach very uninviting for all. This wasn't an unprecedented occurrence as the year before this was done over the main May Bank holiday period causing the beach to be closed over the bank holiday in that year.

This has been brought up with your Officers and their response is that they **will try and avoid Bank Holidays when the beach profiling is undertaken but that it is sometimes unavoidable**. But I would ask why is it unavoidable? Surely with forward planning this could be avoided?

On the hotel and self-catering accommodation side of things the impact is huge and businesses struggling to survive it is highly important that extra obstacles are avoided at all costs. The repercussions on us as operators are great with guests avoiding visiting or requesting discounts due to the feeling they have been unable to enjoy their holiday as planned. For those operating on marine parade this must also have a drastic impact on footfall and thus revenues.

Question - Could these works and those in future be undertaken out of season?

Statement 1 – submitted by Ben Matthews, Managing Director, Lyme Bay Holidays

I am writing in regards to the proposed beach works in Lyme Regis which I understand are once again being planned in what we all hope will be a busy time for tourism within the town. As local businesses re-open at the end of an extremely difficult year this initial period is more valuable than ever. I would request please that my email is passed to the Chairman of Dorset Council to be raised at the next full council meeting.

I fully appreciate that on-going maintenance of the beach is required and as local businesses we all benefit from this but surely as tourism is the key economic provider for the town any major yearly maintenance which necessitates the closures of key areas (which the beach is arguably the main one) that consideration should be given to the economic impact this has?

Previous years have seen the beach closed in May and June for a number of days which as a local letting agent results in us dealing with unhappy visitors and compensation claims, with our guests left questioning why we have not pre-advised them of the disruption, no one believes such information is not public knowledge.

On behalf of all local business owners reliant on visitors enjoying our town and all it offers, I would like to understand why such works cannot be planned for the quieter periods we experience and equally, why we are not notified in advance so we can at very least organise ourselves and pass information to our customers?

As local businesses we collectively need each other to help deliver successful holidays, or enjoyable day visits, whatever it may be, which encourage people to return and spend money within the town and wider area. Such a negative experience as arriving to find the main beach closed, has a huge impact on this experience and leaves nothing but a poor reflection of local accommodation businesses but not only those who have sold the holiday but equally others such as the traders located on Marine Parade and at the Cobb which has lost not only its idyllic setting but also many potential customers.

Undertaking these works in key holiday periods is severely damaging to local business and this should surely be part of the works consideration process or at the very least an explanation offered to why this is not possible and a period of notice given.

Question 2 – submitted by Ben Matthews, Managing Director, Lyme Bay Holidays

Question - Why are we all still unaware when the beach will be closed to undertake these works, surely it would be best for all for such information to be passed to local businesses?

Question 3 – submitted by Mr David Frankl

The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, S122 states that it shall be the duty of every highways company and local authority (ie Dorset Council) ... to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians).

The UK Government has agreed to the Stockholm Declaration 2020 which links road safety to sustainable development. It states in Section 11:

· Focus on speed management, including the strengthening of law enforcement to prevent speeding and mandate a maximum road travel speed of 30 km/h (20mph) in areas where vulnerable road users and vehicles mix in a frequent and planned manner, except where strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe, noting that efforts to reduce speed in general will have a beneficial impact on air quality and climate change as well as being vital to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries.

Question - Will the Council commit to a requirement for 20mph limit throughout all new housing developments and where electors or parish or town councils have requested a lowering of the speed limit, where there are no or inadequate pavements and where pedestrians and other vulnerable road users mix in a frequent manner and that 20mph will become the normal speed limit?

20's Plenty for Dorset ask for 20mph signed limits without vertical engineering (eg speed humps and chicanes), even if existing speeds exceed 25mph, without the need for costly speed surveys

Department for Transport Circular 01/2013 "Setting Local Speed Limits" states

• **S3** - As well as being the legal limit, speed limits are a key source of information to road users, particularly as an indicator of the nature and risks posed by that road both to themselves and to all other road users. Speed limits should, therefore, be evidence-led and self-explaining, and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel and encourage self-compliance.

· **S97** - The implementation of 20 mph limits over a larger number of roads should be considered where mean speeds at or below 24 mph are already achieved over a number of roads. Traffic authorities are already free to use additional measures in 20 mph limits to achieve compliance, such as some traffic calming measures and vehicle activated signs, or safety cameras. Average speed cameras may provide a useful tool for enforcing compliance with urban speed limits.

Question 4 – submitted by Mr David Frankl

Question - Will Dorset Council commit to amending its speed limit policy to allow 20mph limits with signage where mean speeds below 24mph are already achieved over a number of roads?

Politicians representing 21 million people in the UK have already committed to this. They have used a variety of sources, usually found from Government and coordinated at the Highway Authority level to fund it.

People across Dorset want 20mph limits as standard to improve safety and improve the environment. This would allow implementation to cost just £3 per head of population on average, rather than costing hugely more with engineering works. The Government have confirmed that new car models will have speed limiters fitted from April 2022. Speed limiters use traffic-sign-recognition cameras and/or GPS data to determine the limit, automatically limiting engine power and a vehicle's speed to the prevailing limit.

To save money, Traffic Regulation Orders (approx. £5k each) can be grouped to cover the whole county possibly using a phased roll out over a few years.

Question 5 – submitted by Belinda Bawden

Please confirm that Dorset Council will support and fund the proposal from DAPTC for Carbon Literacy training for all town and parish councillors.

An expert from the Centre for Sustainable Energy has tailored the government-accredited Carbon Literacy training for town and parish councillors, focusing on engaging communities in the pathways to net carbon zero.

This training will be a huge support in improving the understanding of councillors about the climate and ecological emergency, enabling them to develop the tools and solutions to engage their local communities in practical actions towards improving better health and well-being for residents, businesses and visitors alike and achieving net carbon zero goals.

Please let us know when this will be rolled out and to whom?

<https://carbonliteracy.com/toolkits/local-authorities/>

Question 6 – submitted by Giles Watts on behalf of the Dorset Climate Action Network (DCAN)

How does the Council expect to defend at Public Examination a Local Plan which, through the scale and proposed pattern of development, has attracted a strong adverse reaction from the public and which would inevitably:

- a. Encroach heavily on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and breach the Green Belt, both of which are defended from development by government policy (see National Planning Policy Framework paras 136 and 172)
- b. Involve building on a large area of greenfield land, some of which is open to flooding, against advice in NPPF paras 117 and 155 to 157
- c. According to the Council's own Sustainability Assessment, do serious damage to both landscape and biodiversity; and act strongly against the pursuit of the Council's own Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy, despite the advice in Section 14 of the NPPF?

Should the Council now draw back from a scale of development which, in the light of these strong adverse impacts, may well be rejected by the Inspector ... which would delay the Local Plan implementation and cause reputational risk to Dorset Council?

Question 7 – submitted by Alistair Chisholm, Independent Dorchester Town Councillor and Co-ordinator of STAND.

I was interested to read Cllr. David Walsh's comments, quoted in the Dorset Echo of 30th March 2021, on the recent granting of funds from central government to create a Local Heritage List for Both Dorset and BCP Councils.

Cllr. Walsh said, "This is great news. It is very important that we help to promote and protect local heritage and forge stronger connections between people and their local areas, at a time when we are reconnecting with what surrounds us and valuing it more than ever."

How does Cllr. Walsh reconcile this view with the sham of the recent Public Consultation on the Local Plan when Dorset residents were asked to comment on a Plan which lacked several vital background papers and was clearly not fit for purpose. It is clear, from the reaction to the DOR 13 proposals for north of Dorchester contained in that Plan, that this area is of huge local value and importance. However there was virtually no involvement of either the Town Council or the Dorchester community prior to its inclusion in the Plan."

Question 8 – submitted by Jane Ashdown

Preamble: The Council is to be congratulated for securing funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to create a County-wide list of local heritage assets with a view to protecting and promoting local heritage including monuments and landscapes. As a Dorchester resident I am especially interested in protecting the valued landscapes of archaeological, cultural and environmental significance around the county town.

Question: Can Councillor Walsh provide information on how and in what time frame Dorset residents will be surveyed about the heritage assets that they value and wish to see added to the Local Heritage List?

Thank you.

Question 9 – submitted by Helen Sumbler

The Dorset Council draft CEE Strategy Transport section states “In rural areas like Dorset, car ownership is amongst the highest in the country. And in 2018 just over 2,500 million vehicle miles were travelled in Dorset Council area. A significant shift will be needed to make active travel and public transport the first transport mode of choice. This will be a significant challenge, in 2018 only 1% of UK passenger journeys were made on public transport.” This information is now over two years out of date, and therefore any plans and programs to address the CEE based on this data might no longer be appropriate or effective, especially bearing in mind the impact the COVID pandemic will have had on public patterns of behaviour with respect to transport.

Increasing the infrastructure for active transport and public transport would not only reduce Dorset's emissions from car use but also reduce the isolation of elderly / non car drivers, and help address transport deprivation in areas without access to public transport for young people and low paid workers who are unable to afford a car.

At Scrutiny Committee, I asked the Scrutiny Committee to explain why it is acceptable that no current Implementation Plan exists for the Local Transport Plan. The response given was that instead of writing an Implementation Plan for an old Local Transport Plan written by predecessor councils, Dorset Council with BCP Council has begun work on 1 new joint Local Transport Plan for 2022-2038 to align with the 2 new Local Plans for Dorset and BCP.

IP4 would have reported on progress of the LTP and set out performance indicators from 2020 to 2023; allowing the council to understand areas where you are performing well and others where you need to focus more effort or attention. The lack of progress report and defined performance indicators for LTP goal 2, tackling climate change, should be of considerable concern, since

transport accounts for the highest percentage of carbon emissions by both Dorset Council and the County as a whole.

Without such information, it is difficult to access detailed information about projects, and understand how projects have been, and will be, identified and prioritised for funding between 2020 and 2022. Please could the council explain in detail which transport projects have been chosen for LTP funding between 2020 and 2022 and how these projects were prioritised and chosen?

Question 10 – submitted by Julie-Ann Booker, on behalf of Extinction Rebellion, Dorchester Weymouth and Portland

Question on Climate and Ecological Emergency Leadership and Influence from Dorset Council

From the outset, a stated aim of Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy has been to provide Leadership and Influence, to make Dorset a net Zero-Carbon county (by 2050).

Following the "Climate Ideas" public consultation in January-February 2020, representatives from Extinction Rebellion Dorchester Weymouth & Portland were invited to present an idea to one of the "Climate Inquiry" Days. With their allotted 5 minutes of time in front of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Executive Advisory Panel on 3rd March 2020, Extinction Rebellion presented:

5 WAYS TO TELL THE TRUTH AND THE BENEFITS OF DOING SO

A communications plan outlining the opportunities for Dorset Council to exercise Leadership and Influence, and help people in Dorset understand the climate and ecological emergency. In the introduction the speaker said: "When XR asks you to Tell the Truth, it doesn't mean we think you are lying. It means we need you to communicate earnestly and clearly about the emergency. There is a huge opportunity for Dorset Council to show Leadership; to influence how residents, organisations and businesses understand and respond to the emergency."

5 straightforward low-cost or cost-free ways to communicate the emergency were presented.

- Residents Letter (direct mail), using an existing household mail out such as Council Tax bills
- Dedicated edition of the quarterly residents News Magazine
- Variable Message Signs (road side electronic message boards), to suggest behaviour changes
- Local media – regular column in local newspaper on C&EE topics/updates provided by EAP members / Leaders, regular slots on local radio stations
- Council Website and Social Media accounts – high visibility C&EE presence and frequent clear, simple messaging

At the end of the presentation the speaker asked if there were any barriers to implementing such a plan, the consensus view from the EAP members indicated there were no barriers. <https://vimeo.com/395514546>
We appreciate that COVID-19 hit us soon after the Inquiry Day and Council communications focused on the national and local requirements for restrictions, and continuous reminders to keep the public safe. This demonstrated how possible it is for the Council to communicate with great urgency, focus and clarity.

From this moment, can Dorset Council commit to implementing a communications plan similar to that presented to and valued by the EAP, that focuses on educating Dorset residents about the C&E Emergency; the causes, the challenges, the required changes and the solutions, and in so doing lead residents, businesses and organisations in Dorset to achieve a zero-carbon county?

Question 11 – submitted by Sarah Pattison

The Equality Act (2010) requires that all ‘plans, policies and procedures’ should take due account of equality impacts. This should start at the beginning of a plan making process and parallel its development. Can you please explain the time line for the delivery of Equality Impact Assessment in parallel to the plan (Dorset Draft Local Plan) making process? Exactly what organisations have been approached that are representative of protected characteristic groups in the Equality Act?

Question 12 – submitted by Solmaz Tavsanoglu

The policies with their supporting texts in the Dorchester Chapter of the Dorset Plan Options Consultation January 2021 are the edited version of or identical to the policies with their supporting texts in the Dorchester Chapter of the West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland Preferred Options Consultation August 2018.

The following questions separately and in sequence are to be answered

Considering these policies and their supporting texts were consulted on in August 2018

- 1) Why were the same policies with same supporting texts consulted on again?
- 2) The present draft local plan demonstrates that responses to the 2018 consultation were not taken into account although the policies remain the same in the draft pan in 2021. Taking the consultation took place

on these policies in 2018 how can residents trust a rerun of the same consultation?

Question 13 – submitted by Caz Dennett, on behalf of Dorset CEE Bill Alliance

The CEE Bill aims to direct the Government to do more to reduce carbon emissions, to protect our countryside and wildlife, and avoid the kind of environmental disruption and disasters that the Ministry of Defence states may aggravate threats to our peace and security.[1] If passed as an Act of Parliament it would ensure that Government develops an emergency strategy. It would also accelerate the ability of local authorities, such as Dorset Council and all our Town and Parish Councils to tackle the C&EE and rapidly reduce carbon emissions.

In summary the Bill has 3 main aims or parts:

Part 1 - focuses on reducing CO2 emissions to keep planetary heating down to 1.5 degrees. This will minimise extreme storms, wildfires, floods and other effects of global warming that we are already experiencing, even here in Britain and in Dorset. Includes emissions from aviation and shipping, and those from imported goods.

Part 2 - sets out the requirements for conserving and restoring ecosystems and soils – protecting wildlife and the places we love, and absorbing lots and lots of carbon into woodland and plant life.

Part 3 – refers to strengthening our democracy and how we make the decisions we need. The Bill calls for a Citizens' Assembly to support Government and Parliament create the strategy to make it happen (the UK Government and many local authorities already use CAs for these purposes). The Bill had its 1st reading in Parliament in Sept 2020. To date 100 MPs (and counting) across 7 political parties have openly declared their support for the Bill. It is due for a 2nd reading this summer.

Several Councils have passed a motion to support the CEE Bill, a simple statement to say they agree with the aims of the Bill e.g. Oxfordshire County Council, and locally Portland Town Council.

A key stated aim in DC's C&EE Strategy is to influence and lobby Dorset's MPs to persuade government to support actions that reduce CO2 emissions, and gain budget to achieve or preferably accelerate the Council's plan and target dates. The CEE Bill seeks to do precisely this and is therefore a highly relevant matter for Dorset Council.

Will Dorset Council use their leadership and influence profile to write to the 5 Dorset MPs in the Dorset Council area (Sir Christopher Chope, Richard Drax, Simon Hoare, Chris Loder, Michael Tomlinson) and request they support the Bill and vote for it when the Bill is reintroduce to parliament, (or if not, why not)?

[1] A Changing Climate – Exploring the Implications of Climate Change for UK Defence and Security:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/930787/dcdc_report_changing_climate_gsp_RR-A487.pdf

Question 14 – submitted by Caz Dennett, on behalf of Dorset CEE Bill Alliance

We understand that Cllr Maria Roe submitted a motion to Full Council, seconded by Cllr Kelvin Clayton (both members of the Climate & Ecological Emergency Executive Advisory Panel), which stated the aims and benefits of the CEE Bill and its relevance to Dorset Council's own C&EE Strategy. A copy of the Motion can be accessed here: <https://dtaction.co.uk/cee-bill/motion-to-dorset-council-full-council-meeting-15-04-21-on-climate-and-ecological-emergency-bill/>

We further understand that since the beginning of 2021, Dorset Council has changed the process for accepting motions from Councillor's to Full Council. The motion on Dorset Council's support for the CEE Bill was rejected and is not being read or debated at this meeting tonight (15th April 2021).

The test for whether a motion was accepted for Full Council reading and debate was previously transparent and is stated in the Dorset Council's Constitution, and has to do primarily with the degree of relevance to Council business (Section 14 MEMBER REQUESTS FOR CONSIDERATION AT FULL COUNCIL, page 112). However, it appears that there is now an unclear-to-the-public, additional step to deciding what is "relevant" and this appears to involve the opinion of the Leaders of each political party group at Dorset Council.

We are concerned that such changes:

1. Negatively impact democracy in Dorset because the decision to accept Councillor's motions has become a political decision, with a political party able to veto a motion, rather than a democratic services decision, based on constitutional prerequisites.
2. May not be constitutional. The Constitution states: Section 14.2(a) (page 112) that the decision to accept a motion or not based on specific criteria is "in the opinion of the Proper Officer in consultation with the Chairman". There is no mention of consulting with political party group leaders. The most recent published Constitution is dated 17th November 2020.
<https://moderngov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/g5040/Public%20reports%20pack%2017th-Nov-2020%20Constitution.pdf?T=10&Info=1>
3. Could effectively ensure that perceived "unfavourable", "challenging" or "politically oppositional" motions may never again be heard at this Council.

Could Council clearly explain the new process for assessing which motions from Councillors are heard in this Council which includes, how the process was decided and who decided it, whether the new process has been written into the Constitution (but not published), and how the change was adopted without a debate and a vote at Full Council?