

**Full Council  
11 May 2023**

**Questions submitted by Councillors**

**Question 1 – submitted by Cllr Les Fry**

Following Natural England's latest report on Nitrates in September 2022, the vast majority of planning applications are still stuck unable to proceed. Developers are asking for advice and guidance from Dorset Council.

Firms are becoming concerned about their staff as they scramble about to find work to keep them employed, they don't want to let them go as they will be needed when applications are approved. Much needed homes are not being built due to the delay in granting consent.

An amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will require the upgrade of all sewerage treatment works serving more than 2,000 people, but this decision may still be way off.

Can an update on the advice and guidance from the Council for developers be given so that jobs are not lost?

**Response by Cllr David Walsh**

There are five catchment areas for internationally protected wetland habitats within, or overlapping with, Dorset Council's administrative area where phosphorus and/or nitrogen levels have the potential to adversely affect water quality. Dorset Council has a legal responsibility to ensure that any development it permits will not adversely affect the integrity of any internationally protected site.

The largest and most significant catchment area affecting Dorset in terms of geographical area and housing applications is Poole Harbour, and Dorset Council has in place an adopted strategy to mitigate the impacts of nitrogen from new residential development. However, the advice from Natural England in September 2022 confirmed that phosphorus is also an issue for Poole Harbour.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is proposing measures which will require improvements to waste water treatment works which, if enacted, will go a significant way to mitigating phosphorus impacts. However, as drafted, there is a risk that smaller treatment works would not be in scope and so the Leader of Dorset Council has written to the Secretary of State to request that all necessary wastewater treatment works in the Poole Harbour catchment are within scope of the intended improvements, and officers have held subsequent meetings with government departments, Natural England and Wessex Water to look at this further. Government is giving careful consideration to Dorset Council's position and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is anticipated to receive Royal Assent during the Summer, at which point we hope to have greater certainty to offer applicants and developers. In the meantime, officers are continuing to work proactively to look at finding solutions, including:

- Working with Registered Providers to deliver mitigation to existing housing stock to provide additional capacity for affordable housing units;
- Engaging with DLUHC to seek additional funding to bring forward mitigation;

- Investigating mitigation options outside of the Poole Harbour catchment, in partnership with neighbouring authorities.

Our website contains information on the latest position and we will continue to provide updates and guidance as the situation evolves.

## **Question 2 - submitted by Cllr Les Fry**

We seem to be going headlong down the Electric car route without much consideration of the impact on the climate and our planet, electric cars emit no pollutants, so that's all right then?

We need Electricity to charge our cars and we know that here in Dorset we are short of sufficient power for our Commercial needs, with some businesses unable to settle here in Dorset due to the lack of electricity. We also seem to be totally ignoring the impact on the environment with the significant mining required and precious metals needed to build our batteries, see the Channel 4 program on mining in The Congo. I am aware of a possible alternative Battery using Ceramic instead of Lithium, which is an exciting prospect.

We know that electric powered vehicles are not suitable for Agriculture, heavy industry or Road Haulage to name just a few examples.

Fossil fuel powered vehicles are being phased out in a few years (from 2030 onwards), as yet we do not seem to have a suitable alternative fuel source.

What is Dorset Council doing to explore an improved electric supply to the County and alternative fuel sources, such as Hydrogen?

## **Response by Cllr Ray Bryan**

Road transport is the UK's highest emitting sector and decarbonising it is a strategic priority. EVs will be central, but they are not a panacea and will be pursued alongside enabling alternatively fuelled vehicles, boosting vehicle occupancy, and facilitating modal shift.

Our strategy for replacing vehicles is two-pronged: EVs for smaller vehicles, and alternative fuels for larger vehicles like HGVs or tractors.

We have taken great steps forward on the smaller fleet having recently expanded our EV pool car fleet substantially, and replaced several small vehicles with EV's and have plans for further expansion over the coming years. To support this, we are expanding the EV infrastructure, such as the 14 new charge points here at County Hall and exploring rolling this out to other Council sites. And through the LEVI funding from government will strengthen the EV network across the county.

The larger fleet is more challenging, but we have been actively exploring a range of technologies to include trials of EV waste vehicles, exploration of hydrotreated vegetable oil, and biomethane-powered vehicles and engaging with the private sector (including vehicle manufacturers) on developing the prospects for local deployment of hydrogen. Additionally, we have been support the South West's first green hydrogen manufacturing by Canford Renewable Energy, through our Low Carbon Dorset programme.

Tech and policy is rapidly evolving on alternative fuels, and much is dependent on government's wider hydrogen strategy, trials, market developments, costs, infrastructure

deployment, and fuel production capacity. We'll continue to keep an eye on opportunities and continue engaging with manufacturers as the situation evolves to nurture a suitable role for alternative fuels alongside EVs.

Grid capacity in Dorset is a concern for the deployment of low carbon technologies such as EV's, although National Grid has given assurances that it will be robust to cope with increased demand for EV's. We are actively engaging with Network Operators and supporting them to anticipate need – to support their strategic investment in a locally efficient and responsive grid.

**Question 3 – submitted by Cllr Matt Hall**

Would the relevant Portfolio Holder provide a figure for the numbers of residents who had their parking permit renewed by taking the payment a week before the renewal date and with no form of reminder being sent? Would the Portfolio Holder agree that considering the current cost of living crisis that lack of any form of reminder was in hindsight a mistake?

**Response by Cllr Ray Bryan**

We do send out renewal reminders for all our permits by e-mail. We have not had any contact relating to the issue below.

We don't set up accounts on auto renewal, the customer has to opt into the system when they apply for the permit.

We will check our systems to ensure they are working correctly but please provide as much information as you can to help investigate the case in question. Any details can be sent to Michael Westwood.