# Cabinet

# 29 January 2026

# Climate Programme – capital workstreams over £500k

# For Decision

**Cabinet Member:**
Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

**Local Councillor(s):**

**Senior Leadership Team:**
S Ford, Corporate Director, Strategy, Performance and Substainability

**Report author and job title: Antony Littlechild, Sustainability Team Manager**
**Email:** antony.littlechild@dorestcouncil.gov.uk

**Statutory Authority: N/A**

**Report status:** Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1.1. **Executive summary**

Dorset Council allocated £10 million capital in the 2022/23 Dorset Council budget to deliver the council's Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy between 2022-2027. This was primarily focused on reducing the council operational carbon footprint.

1.2. To date approximately £6 million of this capital allocation has been spent on a wide range of projects reported to Place and Resources Scrutiny committee as part of the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy 2023 to 25 Refresh - Dorset Council progress reports What's happened so far - Dorset Council

1.3. The remaining £4m allocated for 2025-2027 includes two workstreams that require expenditure above the £500k threshold and therefore require Cabinet approval. These are additional LED street lighting upgrades based on the new policy position and part funding for the next phase of solar installations on council buildings.

1.4. This paper seeks approval for these projects and delegated authority to approve the spend on the remainder of the allocated capital for these project areas.

## 1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That cabinet approves the spend from the corporate climate capital programme for those elements identified as over £500k, as set out in this paper. Specifically-

- £700k for the installation of the next phase of solar PV across the council's estate, and
- £1.3m for replacement of more old, obsolete street lighting with LED street lighting using the PFI contract and in line with the Council's street lighting policy adopted Sep 2025.

1.2 That cabinet delegate authority to the corporate director for Strategy, Performance and Sustainability in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding, to approve further individual item spend within the remaining climate capital allocation, for the identified projects.

## 2. Reason for the recommendation(s)

2.1 There is £4m remaining in the capital programme for workstreams supporting the council's climate objectives. Two workstreams allocated within the current climate capital programme have identified the requirement for spend above the £500k cabinet approval threshold, with the total of these amounting to £2m.

2.2 The delegation in paragraph 2.2 to approve further individual items of spend within the remaining capital allocation will enable projects described in paragraph 7.5 of this report to proceed.

## 3. The report

3.1 Dorset Council allocated £10 million capital in the 2022/23 Dorset Council budget to deliver the council's climate change programmes between 2022-2027. This was to deliver the council's Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology programme and was allocated to a number of workstreams such as – energy efficiency and renewable energy projects on council buildings, developing an electric vehicle charging infrastructure across our estate, purchase of electric vehicles for our pool and operational fleet, installing LED lamps in Dorset streetlights and supporting external programmes such as Low

Carbon Dorset, Healthy Homes Dorset and public electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

3.2 Progress against this capital programme and the council's Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology strategy is reported bi-annually to Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee and to the public What's happened so far - Dorset Council. To date approximately £6m of this allocation has been spent.

3.3 Within the remaining £4million capital allocation two projects have now been identified that will each require individual spend over £500k, in 2025-2027, namely -

3.4 **£700k - next phase of solar PV**

3.4.1 A next phase of solar PV across the DC estate has been identified and developed ready for procurement. In total this programme will deliver an additional 2.25MW solar generation and cost in the region of £2.35m.

3.4.2 As noted in the Cabinet report March 2025 - (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 25/03/2025 18:30 this programme was to be funded from £700k already allocated in the original £10m climate programme and £1.65m from the additional £6.025 million approved at the Cabinet meeting.

3.5 **£1.3m street lighting LED upgrades**

3.5.1 Electricity used by street lighting accounts for 8% of the Council's operational carbon footprint. The replacement of street lanterns with LEDs is therefore a priority area for capital spend and enables an 'invest to save' approach to reduce both carbon and energy costs.

3.5.2 Approval is sought for an increase in forecast contract payments, to facilitate a capital investment of £1.3m from the corporate climate change funding via the existing street lighting PFI contract to replace more of our remaining 9,000 old and obsolete lamps. This will be an accelerated capital investment, replacing up to 4,000 obsolete lanterns, over a two-year period (2026-2027) rather than the previously proposed three-year period (2024, 2025, 2026). This is within the terms of the existing PFI streetlighting contract, which replaces lanterns with LED lighting and so reduces carbon emissions.

3.5.3 The replacement of these obsolete and banned lamps (e.g. those containing mercury or are no longer manufactured) also helps to reduce the risk of highway lights going out shortly after the PFI contract ends in 2032. This is when the legacy lamps in the street lighting asset will all become the responsibility of Dorset Council once again, but by then, replacements will no longer be available. Even with this capital investment now, approx. 5,000 obsolete lights will remain in the asset, an issue which must be addressed before or shortly after the PFI contract ends to avoid highway lights going out.

3.5.4 As reported to Cabinet in September 2025, the PFI provider is already replacing 18,500 old lamps at their expense and the replacement of more of these obsolete lamps will be added to this programme. Inclusion of these lamps within the wider PFI replacement programme will offer significant savings in cost, time and logistics. Investment at this time will enable the whole LED streetlight programme to be accelerated, enabling an acceleration of the associated carbon and cost reductions, as well as the other benefits of the new streetlighting policy in relation to the night sky and protection of biodiversity. Other benefits of the new street lighting policy will be achieved in relation to the appearance of the night sky and protection of biodiversity.

## 4. Alternative options considered

4.1 No action – this will significantly impact on the council plan priority of decarbonising council operations by 2035 and will also not deliver savings and income associated with these interventions.

4.2 Partial funding; the current investments proposed are required to keep the council on its required decarbonisation trajectory, and this involves utilising the £10m for its original purpose.

4.3 Seek alternative sources of capital – alternative sources of funding are continuously being explored but no viable alternatives have been found.

## 5. Legal considerations

5.1 Legal and procurement elements of the next phase of solar installations have been fully considered through the project initiation process, and the scheme has been included on procurement forward plan.

5.2 Additional work and related spend can be awarded to the current supplier (Enerveo) under the terms of the streetlighting PFI.

## 6. Financial implications

6.1 £10m was approved in the Dorset Council Budget 2022/23 and was allocated in the capital delivery programme over 5 years 2022 to 2027 to deliver the climate programme. The remaining allocation for 2025-2027 is approximately £4m.

6.2 A number of larger project spends each over £500k have been identified for streetlighting LED, and Solar Panels on Council buildings. In total these equate to £2 million.

6.3 These funding allocations will facilitate an estimated: -

- Additional 4000 lanterns upgraded to LED, leading to reduce costs of future replacement, an annual saving of 425,000 kWh electricity with a cost reduction in energy in the region of £115k/yr.

- Support delivery of 2.25MW additional Solar PV, as a proportion of the wider £2.35m solar programme the £700k allocation could leading to an estimated annual saving of 330,000 kWh electricity with a cost reduction of £70k/yr. As well as potential for an additional income stream from exported energy.

6.4 An additional £600k has also been approved from the climate capital programme by Cabinet in February 2023 to match fund the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) programme.

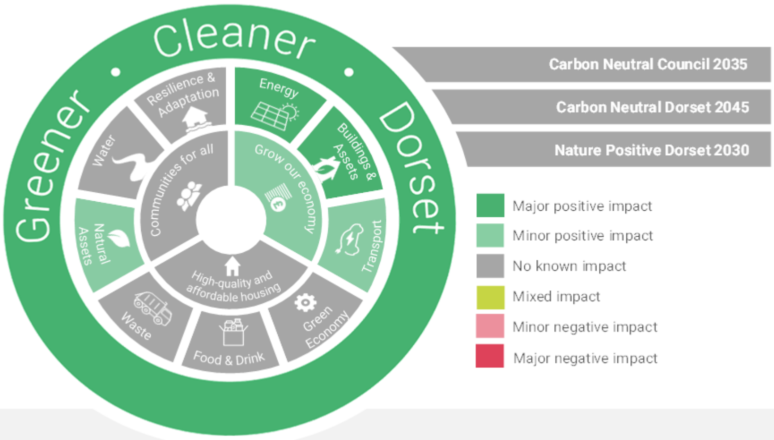
6.5 Projects for the remaining £1.4m fall under the £500k threshold but include energy efficiency projects on our buildings, expansion of EV infrastructure on DC assets, low carbon grants for Dorset organisations and small Solar PV upgrades.

6.6 An additional £6.025 million was allocated by Cabinet in March 2025, to accelerate the delivery of climate programmes.

## 7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

7.1 The council’s Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy aims to deliver positive benefits across all areas highlighted by the wheel. The council capital allocation has been fundamental in supporting this delivery.

7.2 In addition to the financial benefits of these LED and Solar PV schemes they will also reduce the councils operational carbon emissions. This will include annual carbon emissions of approximately 82 tonnes if $CO_2$/yr from upgraded streetlighting and 64 tonnes of $CO_2$/yr, from the £700k investment in solar PV (as a proportion of the wider £2.35m scheme).




**Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)**

| | Unit | Number of units (+/-) |
|---|---|---|
| 2030 - Natural asset extent & condition | Ha | Unknown |
| 2035 - Operational Emissions | $CO_2$ (tonnes) | -146 |
| 2045 - County Emissions | $CO_2$ (tonnes) | Unknown |

## 8. Wellbeing and health implications

8.1 Climate change poses numerous health and wellbeing risks to residents including air pollution and increasing extreme weather events. In addition to showing the leadership required to reduce our impact on climate change, the transition to a low carbon society will realise co-benefits (e.g. more active travel, healthier homes etc.).

## 9. Other implications – None

## 10. Risk implications

10.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk **has been identified as:**

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Medium

10.2 While the impacts of climate change are well documented, the risk of non-delivery will impact on the council's ability to deliver on one of its key priority areas, impacting on its reputation and leadership in this space.

## 11. Financial Equalities

11.1 The IPCC and Climate Change Committee have highlighted the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable people. These impacts are still being investigated at an international and national level, but a more Dorset-specific scoping exercise is being undertaken to highlight localised impacts that need to be considered

## 12. Appendices – None

## 13. Background papers

13.1 Cabinet March 2025 – Revised greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction trajectories and key milestones (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 25/03/2025 18:30

13.2 Cabinet Paper Feb 2023 – Charging ahead: Public electric vehicle charging infrastructure programme (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 28/02/2023 10:00 (Nb: exempt paper)

## 14. Report sign-off

14.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial (Section 151 Officer), Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Sustainability and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)