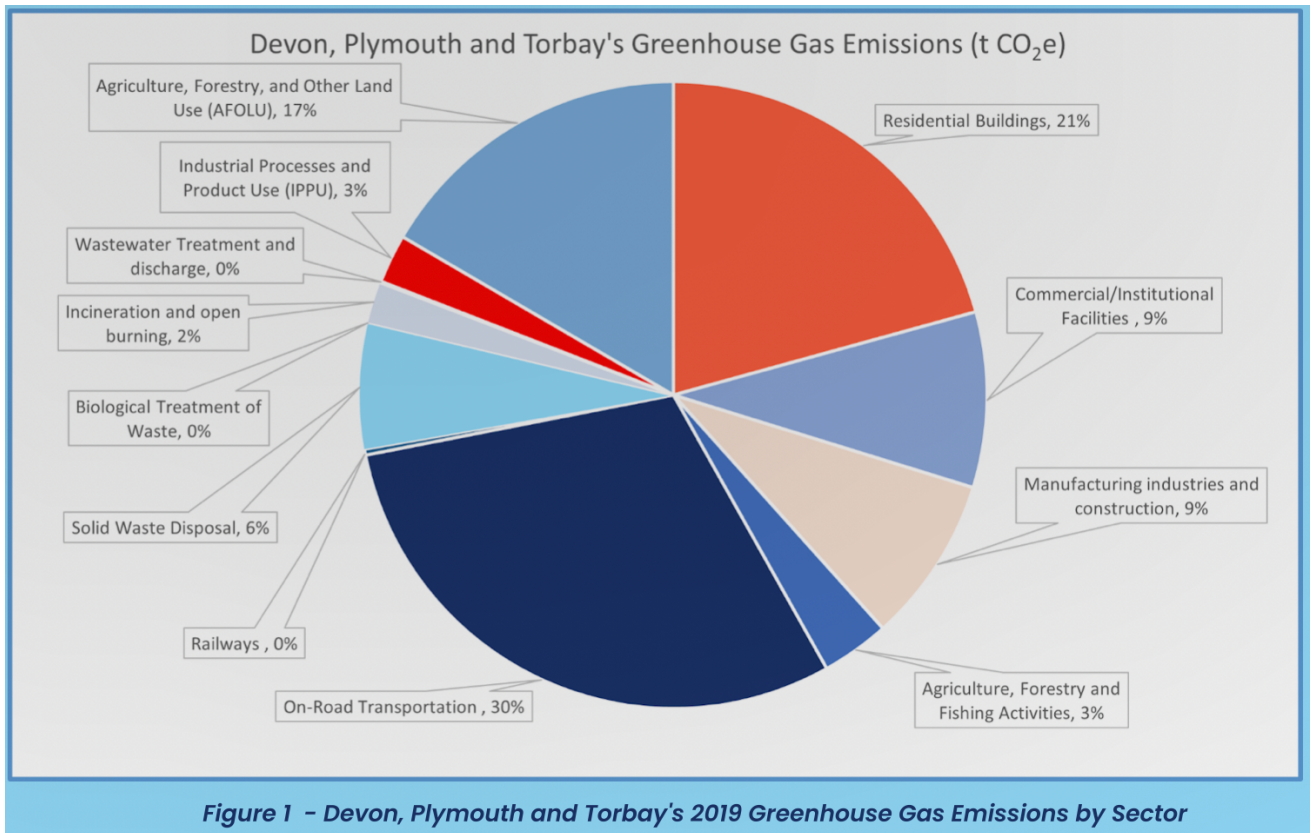


Climate & Ecological Emergency Action Plan Working Group  
Notes of meeting – 25th October 2022

**Present:**

CLlr Jacqi Hodgson - JH(Notes), Ian Bright- IB(TRESOC), Richard O'Connell - ROC, Barbara Philips - BP, Frank Benatt - FB, Tom Cooper - TC, Richard Hodgson - RH

1. Everyone introduced themselves. Concern was raised that the circulation list might not be contacting everyone. Action JH to check
2. Devon Carbon Plan: had been released earlier in the month. The pie chart of emissions in Devon was discussed.



The largest cause for emissions is 30% attributed to transportation. There was a discussion about how more freight should be switched to rail and more non-vehicular 'Active Travel' routes should be developed to encourage people to use personal transport less. Concern was expressed about the recent reductions in bus services: it was suggested that important and probably viable routes such as services to the hospital could be a way to return some services.

There was some confusion about the two different sectors labelled Agriculture & forestry. It was queried whether this included meat production. (Action JH to ask at DCC)

Regarding the permanent pasture used for cattle; if this was reduced to a more sustainable level, it was suggested that this could liberate 85% of land for trees and wildlife. Which could be win-win for reducing emissions too.

3. Details of the Sustainable South Hams events recently held had been attached to the agenda; these were outlined by JH and others who had attended the sessions and discussed by the group:

**South Hams Climate Assembly in Kingsbridge: held SATURDAY 8<sup>th</sup> October**

**This was a very interesting and well attended gathering of local councillors and activists from local community groups** interested in getting involved in local action to reduce carbon and regenerate nature. There were various special sessions on community energy and community composting schemes.

Adam Williams, Climate Officer at SHDC, ran a short workshop using a **simple-to-use tool which maps the key areas where the highest CO2 emissions come from in South Hams Parishes**. More info at the SHDC website link:

<https://www.climatechange.southhams.gov.uk/copy-of-funding-and-help>

4. Sharing Ideas for improving biodiversity

**The Gardening for Wildlife booklet**, initiated by Dittisham PC and the first copy produced by Ashprington, Blackawton, Cornworthy and Dittisham parishes collectively was one of the stalls at this event. The PDF of the designed and illustrated text is being made available to other parish councils who can change the front cover to add their name instead. Staverton and Bigbury are amongst those who have done this so far. All participating parish councils are having hard copies printed and distributed to their residents.

The Gardening for Wildlife book was considered a very good idea for Totnes to go ahead with and distribute its own copy to residents. It was suggested that this could lead to a sustainable gardens trail for the townNature Arts Trail in Teignmouth.

**Greener Churchyards Workshop.** Sustainable South Hams and Greener East Allington, combined forces to organise a very interesting event on 14<sup>th</sup> October. David Curry, retired Reverend and Ecologist from the Exeter Diocese 'Living Churchyards' project, presented a talk about Living Churchyards and the plans for East Allington. This was followed by a short talk by Charlotte Rathbone, a landscape architect from Rathbone Associates who as part of MoDWag was responsible for creating a wildlife project in Modbury Churchyard. This was followed by a short walk to St Andrew's churchyard to see the work which has just started. It was very inspiring and insightful.

Great enthusiasm for this was expressed at the CERG for the Totnes Cemetery and churchyards to adopt some of these measures to support wildlife and biodiversity.

5. **Community Composting Workshop** - South Brent 15<sup>th</sup> October. The SHDC waste team officers who addressed this workshop were very keen to support local parishes who are interested in setting up a local community scheme. There are two excellent schemes currently up and running in Ashprington and South Brent which SHDC supports and provide good models (that are well worth a visit).. This is the link to the SHDC Community Composting scheme offer and support: <https://www.southhams.gov.uk/community-composting>

The model of Ashprington's Community Compost was discussed as being a good model for Totnes to look into: suggested possible sites that could be investigated:

- At the rear of the industrial area (opposite the old site of Refurnish) where there is currently underused hard standing used for parking
- Steamer Quay / Longmarsh car park
- Follaton House Car park
- A Bridgetown site is needed too (possibly somewhere near the Chicken Run).

**Other points discussed:**

**Carbon Savvy** had been an initiative outlined at the assembly meeting. This is being promoted by Zero Carbon Bigbury on Sea. This is the link for the website that helps people calculate their carbon footprint: <https://carbonsavvy.uk>

Sustainable South Hams have funded places for this. The Climate Hub in Totnes are going to run some courses (similar to Transition Streets).

The success of the **SHDC Green Homes Officer** was raised and it was queried how many households had been helped by the grant funded programme he had been managing and whether he had produced a report. Action, JH to ask at SHDC.

An enquiry was made about SHDC seeking parcels of land for Renewable energy. Action JH to investigate and share information.

Local Energy Clubs were raised and the invitation from TRESSOC to Totnes TC was asked about. Action: IB to check with TC Officer Tina who had prepared the TC assessment of the scheme.

6. The Energy Wise Show is taking place at the Civic Hall on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October from 12 noon to 5pm. It is expected that this will be really helpful to many people.
7. Notification of a BEIS government Net Zero public consultation had been sent by SHDC to JH. The group suggested and discussed some responses to the first few questions. Action: JH to complete the response on behalf of the group, share with the participants at this meeting and submit to the consultation. Full response submitted on behalf of the group attached below.
8. Urgent business - Totnes Town Council budget for the forthcoming year would be taking place soon. A brief discussion was held regarding the climate emergency budget and whether attendees considered it appropriate to use this budget to support the funding of some projects that had been proposed in the town:
  - Totnes Bike Hub (had applied for £3,996.00 for their Pre-loved bike project)
  - Transition Town Totnes – laptops. (had applied for £1,870 for laptops)
  - The Mansion – (had applied for £2,800.00 for electric hot water heaters).
  - Participation by Totnes reps in Sustainable South Hams events – entry & travel costs only

It was agreed that these were all worthwhile proposals for funding under the Totnes TC Climate emergency budget. Nb no actual amounts were agreed for this support in principle.

9. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 15th November 2022

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION - Net Zero Review: National Call for evidence – (closed 27th October 2022)**

<https://beisgovuk.citizenspace.com/nzs/call-for-evidence-on-net-zero-review/>

### **Response sent in on behalf of Totnes Town Council: further to discussion on some of the points at Totnes Climate & Ecological Emergency working group:**

#### **Overarching questions**

##### **1. How does net zero enable us to meet our economic growth target of 2.5% a year?**

- I. By prioritising local renewable energy, new green jobs.
- II. (schools need to promote this as a career – REAL)
- III. Green industry and turbines
- IV. Only by aspiring for net zero do we have any prospect of 2.5% and meaningful growth, i.e. that benefits people, otherwise we will have to cope as a society with droughts and floods (and lack of insurance cover for many people)
- V. It provides a driver for sustainable growth through making and selling things not just services
- VI. We can no longer just expand our carbon emissions
- VII. Is this a reasonable question when the planet has finite growth; should growth be 0%?

##### **2. What challenges and obstacles have you identified to decarbonisation?**

- II. Need to reduce business rates and similar incentives
- III. We need to be more self-sufficient and use renewable energy
- IV. We need to make and use sustainable technology
- V. The aging population is increasing – we need more medics and technicians which would add to the GDP
- VI. Resistance to change,; behaviour change is hard to achieve
- VII. People need to change their diet to plant rather than meat based
- VIII. The Government is not providing clear guidance on what they need to do and that there is a Climate and Ecological emergency
- IX. A carbon tax would drive ecological tax reform. i.e the Polluter Pays Principle
- X. Not taking actions that create greater inequality that we clearly have; measures such as subsidies should support great equality to enable everyone equal access to affording good quality food
- XI. Need for life skills (e.g. repairing, cooking, growing) to be taught in schools
- XII. Investments, in particular Pension schemes (e.g. Devon County Council's Pension fund has £5.45Bn value) are still investing in fossil fuels. This should be stopped immediately; possibly initially with a massive tax on their dividends being demanded by the government and put into a renewable energy fund.

##### **3. What opportunities are there for new/amended measures to stimulate or facilitate the transition to net zero in a way that is pro-growth and/or pro-business?**

- I. Agriculture:
  - II. Establish regenerative farming and growing research institutes to support more plant based growing and food
  - III. Supports for ecological stewardship measures and wild areas for landowners and farmers; these need to demand clear and higher biodiversity benefits per acre. Regenerative farming measures to be sought and taught with new funding and learning provision to drive this.
- IV. Travel:
  - V. Increase public subsidies and spending (switch from roads budgets) onto new and safer non-vehicular public footpaths and cycleways to implement Active Travel Routes throughout the country to enable switch from private cars.
  - VI. Renationalise and reinstate fully funded public transport to make private cars unviable
  - VII. Carbon tax on all fossil fuels
  - VIII. Require freight to be transported by night-time rail via new drive on-drive off rolling stock
  - IX. Install solar panels on all public transport and phase in electrification of all public transport
- X. Planning
- XI. New planning requirements to raise the bar to protect wildlife, habitats and biodiversity; e.g.

- XII. Regenerative planning system to be new basis for all development
- XIII. Greater protection of habitats in planning provision; i.e. not allow clearance of wildlife areas, but require new 'interplanting' to avoid unnecessary biodiversity loss.
- XIV. Require larger gardens / communal areas, in new estates to ensure biodiversity can thrive in urbanised areas too and increase public appreciation and knowledge of wildlife
- XV. Reinstate sustainable codes for planning that require all new homes to be passive house standard
- XVI. Economics:
- XVII. Support New Green Deal with major investment in renewable energy and associated jobs – possibly funded by investment schemes, in particular Pension schemes (e.g. Devon County Council's Pension fund has £5.45Bn value) are still investing in fossil fuels. This should be stopped immediately; possibly initially with a massive tax on their dividends being demanded by the government and put into a renewable energy fund.
- XVIII. Invest in publicly funded local projects to carry out insulation in the homes of people on low income &/or benefit
- XIX. Switch funding from private based investment zones and Freeports to Public ownership based sustainable growth zones
- XX. Increase public spending on local authorities as they provide good value services to meet the needs of residents
- XXI. Work with local authorities to Invest in businesses that can use waste materials as resources for new manufacturing etc
- XXII. Rethink waste as a resource and keep it local to avoid transport costs

#### 4. What more could government do to support businesses, consumers and other actors to decarbonise?

- I. Reverse BREXIT – it has added to the economic crisis and we need to work across the nationals together, not pull up a very expensive drawbridge
- II. Establish a Carbon Conscription year for all young people to do as they leave education / or gap year. This would require them to be part of teams doing sustainable agriculture (e.g. like WWOOFERS -Willing Workers On Organic Farms scheme), on working in local area on housing installation teams or involved in repair, recycling initiatives such as community composting. They would also receive p/t education on sustainable living.
- III. Use carbon as a parallel currency to sterling to increase understanding of the carbon footprint of their choices and purchases
- IV. Implement a carbon tax
- V. Switch subsidies from fossil fuels to renewable energy
- VI. Reconsider waste as a resource and use this to create new industries, learning, skills and jobs, e.g. repairing and servicing white goods, reuse of old materials to create new fibres, products (e.g. like the old 'Shoddy')
- VII. Create a personal Carbon Ration Book to guide people in how to live within a reasonable carbon budget and feel it is part of fair shares

#### 5. Where and in what areas of policy focus could net zero be achieved in a more economically efficient manner? (see replies to Q 3 above)

#### 6. How should we balance our priorities to maintaining energy security with our commitments to delivering net zero by 2050?

- I. Complete focus on investment in renewable energy and switch subsidies from fossil fuels to renewable energy
- II. Re-think the national grid to enable more renewable energy to be accepted and circulated via local grids that also support local energy 'clubs'
- III. Make a commitment to end the use of fossil fuels and nuclear energy as both leave an unquantifiable economic and carbon legacy
- IV. Enable on-shore wind to be economically viable and reduce planning restrictions – this is an emergency!

#### 7. What export opportunities does the transition to net zero present for the UK economy or UK businesses?

(see replies to Q3 above)

### Questions for the public

18. Have you or are you planning to take personal action to reduce your carbon emissions (for example through how you travel, what you buy, how you heat your home)? If so, how?

- I. Many people have installed solar panels on their homes and time their use of key appliances such as washing machine and kettle to match when the sun is producing most energy.
- II. Walk, cycle, take the train or bus as a first choice for travel whenever possible.
- III. Use jumpers and a blanket on the settee rather than more central heating in the evenings
- IV. Some have installed a log burner which we use for colder weather
- V. We repair, recycle and produce very little residual waste
- VI. We generally use charity shops for many purchases
- VII. We do what we can, whenever we can to reduce our carbon footprint and support wildlife
- VIII. We use virtual meetings a lot when we are working and for social purposes too

19. Do you face any barriers to doing this? What are they?

- I. The lack of reliability of busses and sometime trains makes this difficult.
- II. Despite the availability of senior rail passes, the train is still more expensive than the car
- III. Many have reduced our meat consumption, and only buy organic meat, others are vegetarian or vegan
- IV. We grow (organically) a lot of our own veg and fruit

20. What would help you to make greener choices?

- I. Green subsidies on most things that are lower carbon, including public transport
- II. Need to for more information on products and services to help understand what would be a better choice

21. What is working well about the measures being put in place to reach net zero?

- I. The government at least accepting that we have a climate emergency – although to date too little to make net zero happen
- II. Working from home is making a difference to travel
- III. Supports for organic growers

22. What is not working well about the measures being put in place to reach net zero?

Essentially, they are a lot of talk and impressive papers, but very little real action to bring about change (due to the constant cry of austerity and no money – when we all know how much public money is being poured into the real costs of BREXIT (eg all the legal costs of completely rewriting the laws of the country), the huge profits being made by energy companies & private schools, to name a few.

23. Do you have any further comments on how efforts to tackle climate change are affecting you?

The 2010 austerity cuts undermined public services and took away a lot of very knowledgeable and experienced local authority officers providing good and often very sustainable services for local residents, based on meeting needs not making profits. The cuts have driven the emphasis at Local Authorities to be supporting larger developers (who do very little if anything towards sustainable development) and allowing low grade new buildings and removal of wildlife areas and green field, and also working with private partnerships e.g. the so called investment zones and Freeport initiatives for public funding to be poured into the likes of luxury yacht providers and the nuclear deterrent; this is a waste opportunity that could be investing in local, low carbon initiatives to take us towards zero carbon, rather than the current 10% annual increase of our emissions.

### Questions for local government, communities and other organisations delivering net zero locally

24. What are the biggest barriers you face in decarbonising / enabling your communities and areas to decarbonise?

- I. The lack of leadership and good example at government level – during the Covid pandemic, most people did follow government advice and made huge changes to the way they lived and were very

willing to make big compromises in their lives because it was clear this was being treated as a national (and international) emergency.

- II. The economic crisis and lack of funding to support the vital changes needed to encourage changes; e.g. subsidies public transport to enable people out of private cars and to use lower carbon options. The lack of public funding for active travel routes to be established
- III. The lack of a clear plan to decarbonise life and have a carbon ration book to guide people in how to live within a reasonable carbon budget and establish a 'Fair Shares' system, as people are more likely to compromise if they feel others are doing it too
- IV. Lack of 'Sustainability is Cool' culture; i.e. BREXIT has added to a very self-centred attitude that justifies privatisation, just when we need to be thinking globally and acting locally in a very public spirited way collectively.

25. What has worked well? Please share examples of any successful place-based net zero projects.

- I. The Government's Dig for Victory booklet distributed to all households in WW2
- II. Allotments
- III. Public pedestrian and cycle paths
- IV. Rewilding – e.g. the leadership shown by Knepp Estate in Sussex/Surrey
- V. Community Composting
- VI. Regenerative planning and the zero carbon initiatives being introduced in Wales
- VII. Our local Food in Community project that gleans and redistributes fresh local food
- VIII. Public subsidies for solar panels (abandoned some years ago) and generous FITs schemes

26. How does the planning system affect your efforts to decarbonise?

- I. It makes it easier for non-sustainable development to build all over green open spaces and agricultural land
- II. New developments in this area take out large sections of wildlife corridors, and their associated wildlife habitats and apparently protected wildlife species – legally!
- III. The new Investment Zone in our area (South Hams) will be buying up (compulsory purchased), large areas of agricultural land for economic development which will be covered in business as usual portacabins and car parks – nowhere near a railway hub. Without even any economic proposals on the table to justify any need for this type of economic development; when we do know that agriculture produces food.

27. How can the design of net zero policies, programmes, and funding schemes be improved to make it easier to deliver in your area?

Please take on board all of the points already raised in the earlier replies to your questions

28. Are there any other implications of net zero or specific decarbonisation projects for your area that the Review should consider?

This area is as affected by the warming seas, the melting ice caps and the release of methane in Siberia as everywhere else. Please just bring in the urgently needed changes. We need strong governance to clearly demonstrate that the UK government is taking very seriously and prioritising the United Nation as prediction of impending doom for this planet if we don't make immediate and urgent changes to decarbonise how we live. The Devon Carbon plan has a very clear pie chart of emissions, that show 30% of these come from transport. So make a start with my suggestions around transport above; perhaps use this area as a pilot project. We are a Transition Town Council, supporting and working with our Transition Town Totnes group and Climate Hub. Please work with us to make a difference.