

## Consultation Response on the draft Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Climate Adaptation Strategy

Report of the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

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Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

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### 1) Recommendation

That the Cabinet be asked to approve the proposed consultation response at Section 3 from Devon County Council to the Devon Climate Emergency partnership on the draft Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Climate Adaptation Strategy.

### 2) Background / Introduction

Devon County Council (DCC) has declared a climate emergency and is a founding partner and principal funder of the Devon Climate Emergency (DCE) initiative. In signing the Devon Climate Declaration, DCC has committed to working with partners to understand the near-term and future risks arising from climate change to plan for how infrastructure, public services and communities will have to adapt.

Climate adaptation refers to becoming more resilient to the changing climate by anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate action to reducing the risk from its impacts (e.g. sea level rise, heatwaves, flooding, drought etc.).

The Devon, Cornwall, and Isles of Scilly (DCIoS) Climate Impacts Group (CIG), currently chaired by the Environment Agency and coordinated by DCC, was formed in 2019 in response to declarations of climate emergency across the three areas.

The CIG has prepared the draft DCIoS Climate Adaptation Strategy. It is a strategic-level document. It comprises of three sections:

1. A Climate Change Risk and Opportunity Assessment (CCRA) split by sector - natural environment, infrastructure, health and built environment, business and industry, and cross-cutting risks. These sectors broadly correspond with the sectors used in the national climate change risk assessment, which was used as the basis for the analysis.
2. A Strategic Adaptation Plan, which sets out the conditions for everyone to act on adapting to climate change together ("Adaptation Plan"). It provides a set of strategic objectives and suite of strategic-level adaptation options that could be considered for regional collaboration.

3. An Action Plan, which sets out the priority actions for regional collaboration over the next five years, and specific actions for different groups: policy makers, organisations, community groups and individuals.

The full document can be viewed at <https://www.climateresilient-dcios.org.uk/#adaptation-strategy>

It focuses on climate impacts which require, or which would benefit from, regional collaboration. Due to the place-based and context specific nature of climate risk and opportunities, it is not the purpose of this Adaptation Strategy to plan the detail of how individual areas and communities should adapt. Instead, such detailed plans will be captured at an appropriate level depending upon the risk – it could be at county, district, community or parish level – some communities already have these for specific issues, such as the Slapton Line in South Devon.

The CIG recognises that it has an important role in supporting others to develop their own adaptation plans at a range of scales, from sectoral to household level. The Adaptation Strategy is intended to inform a programme of regional interventions to adapt to climate change, as well as catalysing place-based, grassroots, and organisational action on climate adaptation.

The draft Adaptation Strategy has been open for public consultation during May and June 2023. The final version of the Strategy will be published in the autumn and partner organisations will subsequently be invited to endorse it.

### **3) Proposed Consultation Response**

As a principal contributor to the Strategy, DCC (“the Authority”) is hugely grateful to the Climate Impacts Group for preparing such a comprehensive register of risks and opportunities to the DCIoS region from climate change and to the wider DCE partnership for their input.

The Strategy shows that climate change will have far reaching and profound implications for how places function, are planned, how they feel and how behaviours need to change. The Authority fully believes in the co-benefits that are available to Devon through achieving net-zero and adapting to the effects of climate change.

The authority notes and agrees with the five main impact themes identified by the assessment, which each contribute to a series of related risks described more fully in the Strategy. These are:

- River and surface water flooding: Devon and Cornwall are highly susceptible to the impacts of river and surface water flooding. Climate change is projected to increase winter rainfall and increase the intensity and frequency of storm events, furthering the region’s vulnerability.
- Sea level rise (coastal flooding and erosion): If global temperatures increase by 4°C by 2100, projections suggest sea level in the region is very likely to rise by between 0.24m and 0.38m by 2050. Wave height, storm surges and offshore wind speed are also expected to increase as a result of climate change, resulting in more intense storm events and greater impacts from coastal flooding.

- Reduced water availability (drought conditions): It is projected that decreased summer rainfall will increase the likelihood and length of drought periods and water scarcity. Prolonged periods of reduced water availability will have significant negative impacts on agricultural productivity, commercial forestry and terrestrial and freshwater species and habitats.
- Temperature change and extreme heat/cold: Climate change is expected to increase average temperatures, the number of hot days, summers, heatwaves, and periods of extreme heat. These are likely to cause negative health impacts, including direct impacts (e.g. from increased illness and death from cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and other chronic health conditions) and indirect impacts on health (e.g. impact on health services, increased risk of accidents, transmission of food and water borne diseases).
- Cascading impacts: Interacting and cascading impacts can be triggered by multiple hazards that occur coincidentally or sequentially, creating substantial disruption to human and or natural systems.

The Authority supports the draft Strategy and will do what it can to implement relevant actions within its areas of responsibility, including helping Devon's citizens to play their part in improving the resilience of their communities. DCC agrees with the CIG's conclusion that whilst local authorities will play an influential role in preparing the community and other stakeholders for the changes ahead, success will require a collaborative approach involving government departments and agencies, transport and utility providers, local businesses, communities and individuals to develop and build the adaptation actions needed in each sector. To this end the Authority fully supports the continuation of the CIG to manage and coordinate delivery of the Strategy and its continued strategic relationship with the DCE partnership and the related climate initiatives in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. National government action and funding will continue to be necessary to deliver some of the transformations necessary at the speed required.

The two-way relationship between the CIG and the Local Resilience Forum will continue to be vital to ensure response plans for climate-related community risks are adequate and are updated as the climate continues to change.

DCC aims to ensure that nobody's needs are overlooked in planning for climate change, and that the wide-ranging opportunities to improve health, wellbeing and social justice are seized – just as for the carbon reduction agenda.

Feedback on matters of detail have been provided to the DCE secretariat, which does not materially affect DCC's support for the Strategy at this stage of its development. The Authority looks forward to viewing the final version in autumn 2023.

#### **4) Options / Alternatives**

DCC has three options available:

- a. This is the option recommended by this report. Support the draft DCIoS Climate Adaptation Strategy and provide feedback on matters of detail that do not materially affect DCC's support for the Plan.

- b. Support the intent of the draft Strategy but provide comment on fundamental elements which DCC cannot support. This is not recommended because feedback from officers across the Authority's responsibilities have not identified fundamental concerns that would warrant withholding support at this stage of the Strategy's preparation.
- c. Do not support the Strategy. This is not recommended for the same reason as option b and would add substantial delay to the DCE process.

## **5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data**

The Climate Change Standing Overview Group of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee has contributed to the comments on points of detail passed to the DCE secretariat.

## **6) Strategic Plan**

The DCIoS Climate Adaptation Strategy contributes to all six priorities in the Council's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025. By preparing communities, infrastructure, services, the economy and the environment for climatic changes, the Strategy will help:

- Respond to the climate emergency
- Support sustainable economic recovery
- Tackle poverty and inequality
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Help communities be safe, connected and resilient
- Be ambitious for children and young people.

## **7) Financial Considerations**

There are no financial requests on DCC for the implementation of the Strategy. DCC, along with other community actors, will need to consider finding resources to address the climate risks identified by the Strategy that are relevant to its services, areas of responsibility and influence.

## **8) Legal Considerations**

There are no specific legal considerations.

## **9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)**

The DCIoS Climate Adaptation Strategy assesses the risks to the environment from climate change and proposes actions to manage those risks.

There is scope for resilience projects, particularly those relating to hard infrastructure such as a sea wall, or projects that may increase energy consumption such as actively cooling buildings, to negatively affect the environment. There are opportunities to work collaboratively with communities and statutory bodies to navigate these potential pitfalls so

that these become opportunities for positive effects – such as using nature to control flooding, rather than building hard infrastructure.

The environmental impacts of specific projects arising from the implementation of the Strategy will be managed on an individual basis.

## **10) Equality Considerations**

Where relevant, in coming to a decision the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding

in relation to the protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (for employment), pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

A decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

In progressing this particular scheme / proposal, an Impact Assessment has been prepared which has been circulated separately to Cabinet Members and also is available on the Council's website at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/published>

Members will need to consider the Impact Assessment for the purposes of this item / meeting.

Climate change will affect everybody in the county, and it will affect people less able to adapt the most. These include less affluent people, those living with physical and mental health conditions, those living in coastal communities or other areas prone to flooding and young people who will live with the effects becoming worse over their lifetimes. Implementing the recommendation will help progress regional efforts to these impacts on everyone. The Strategy includes a more detailed commentary on people most vulnerable to climate change.

Implementing the Strategy to improve resilience will require changes to the way the Authority's services are provided, which has the potential to impact negatively and positively on service users depending on the specifics of the proposals once they are developed. Tactical-level changes to services will need their own impact assessment to consider their effect on equality characteristics.

## **11) Risk Management Considerations**

The potential risks to Devon's communities from climate change are profound e.g. extreme sea level rise, health effects (heat stress, anxiety, vector-borne diseases etc.), increased flood risk, economic shocks and a breakdown of environmental services that provide food, fuel and pharmaceuticals to name just a few. These are all recorded in the Climate Change Risk and Opportunities Register described above.

Whilst DCC is unable to increase Devon's resilience by itself, it is vital that the Authority demonstrates local leadership alongside the DCE partners.

The corporate and community risk registers will be reviewed to ensure relevant risks in the DCloS Strategy are captured and managed.

## **12) Summary**

The Strategy shows that climate change will have far reaching and profound implications for how places function, are planned, how they feel and how behaviours need to change. DCC looks forward to continuing the formal collaboration with partners on the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group and working in partnership with everyone to continue the reduction of Devon's greenhouse gas emissions and the required adaptation to the inevitable impacts of climate change.

### **Meg Booth**

Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

### **Electoral Divisions: All**

Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport: Councillor Andrea Davis

## **Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers**

Background Paper: Impact Assessment for the draft Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Climate Adaptation Strategy

Date: June 2023

File Reference: The above mentioned Reports are published on the Council's Website at:

<http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

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