

**QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**  
**Wednesday 12 June 2019**

**1. QUESTION FROM MR HUGHES (IN ATTENDANCE)**  
**Re: Climate Change and Transport Budget**

It is to be welcomed that the Council have recognised a Climate Crisis and Councillors will be aware that transport is the largest emitting sector. This is an area where we can make considerable gains very quickly: 8 months ago the UN said we need to start making radical change within 2 years to address this crisis. Clearly the DCC transport budget needs revision to reflect these realities: currently a mere 7% is allocated for cycling.

How will the next budget see DCC hugely prioritise funding for active transport within the county?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES**

The Council has extensive background in delivering active travel projects, schemes such as the Tarka Trail and Exe Estuary Trail are exemplar examples. Our programme this year has a number of schemes ready for delivery and others in preparation, this amounts to approximately 17% of the transport capital budget.

Next year's budget has not been prepared but your observations on active travel will be taken into account.

**2. QUESTION FROM MR VINT (IN ATTENDANCE)**  
**Re: Pension Fund Investments and Unison's Divest from Carbon Campaign**

In light of the Climate Emergency, UNISON's 'Divest from Carbon' campaign and the 03/06/2019 statement by the Pensions Minister, Guy Opperman, in support of moving Pension Fund investments out of fossil fuel industries and into renewable energy, will the Council now consult UNISON and staff and review this option?

*Background information:*

UNISON's 'Divest from Carbon' campaign <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2018/01/Divest-from-carbon-campaign.pdf> 03/06/2019 statement by the Pensions Minister, Guy Opperman:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2019/jun/03/pensions-must-do-right-thing-on-climate-change-says-minister>  
<https://www.cityam.com/invest-green-energy-urges-minister-financial-risks-climate/>  
<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-climate-pensions/uk-pensions-minister-warns-of-financial-risks-from-climate-change-idUKKCN1T416I>

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

Any issues relating to the Pension Fund are a matter for the Investment and Pension Fund Committee and do not fall within the remit of the Cabinet.

However, I will arrange for the Chair of the Investment and Pension Fund Committee to send a written response to your question.

**3. QUESTION FROM MRS COOMBS (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)**

**Re: Procurement Policy and Supporting the Local Economy**

Will the Council draw up procurement policies to prioritise buying locally, support local businesses and the local economy, and avoid the carbon footprint resulting from long-distance transportation of goods?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR PARSONS**

The Devon County Council [Environmental Sustainable Procurement policy 2016-2020](#) was adopted by Cabinet on 1st January 2017; this policy details key aims, objectives and commitments around sustainability for all contracting activity. The policy draws out the advantages in buying locally; such as supply chain resilience, continuity of supply, minimising environmental impacts and making a positive contribution to employment and local communities. In addition to the policy, the Council support and encourage local business and the voluntary sector in bidding for County Council contracts. An example of this is the annual Going Local event (meet the local Council buyer) which is organised with other Councils to engage and encourage local organisations to bid for Council contracts.

**4. QUESTION FROM MR SCOTT (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)**

**Re: RegenSW and Partnership Working**

How will the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group (DCERG) work with RegenSW to develop and deliver a Renewable Energy Strategy for Devon?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD**

The opportunities to decarbonise Devon's energy needs, including the use of renewable energy, will be reviewed as part of the development of the Devon Carbon Plan. Regen is one of a number of organisations with expertise in sustainable energy. Devon County Council already commissions an annual renewable energy progress report from Regen and has worked effectively with them to establish Devon as a leading County in community-owned renewable energy. Further input by Regen to the work of the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group will, no doubt, be welcome.

**5. QUESTION FROM MS VAN KOTEN (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)**

**Re: Work with Schools for Energy Efficient School Buildings**

How will DCC work with schools in Devon to make school buildings energy-efficient and to promote the use of on-site renewable energy generation to power schools?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

Devon County Council work in partnership with the South West Energy Partnership (SWEP) to engage with schools and promote energy efficiency across the school estate including working on "invest to save" solutions and accessing appropriate finance to support this approach. This partnership engages with both the maintained and academy school sectors (which makes up approximately 45% of the school estate in Devon but is outside of County Council control).

SWEP is EU funded initiative led by Bristol City Council in partnership with Devon County Council and Plymouth City Council.

In addition, through the County Councils own Capital Maintenance Programme for maintained schools (where we target the highest priority condition items across the school estate) the County Council undertake to review options for “greener” energy solutions where these are appropriate and they offer demonstrably more efficient, reliable and economic solutions. We also through our maintenance programme strive to upgrade existing building fabric (roof insulation, windows etc) of our schools to the latest Building Regulation Part L requirements.

As an example, through the schools Capital Maintenance Programme we have recently completed projects at Denbury and Kenn Primary Schools (both all electric schools) with the use of on-site energy generation and on-site energy storage to significantly increase their energy efficiency and reduce their reliance on “grid” energy supply. The recently completed replacement Primary School at Loddiswell has also been designed to a zero carbon in use standard, meaning that the building has been modelled that on-site energy generation is equal to the predicted on-site energy requirements.

**6. QUESTION FROM MRS PHILLIPS (IN ATTENDANCE)**  
**Re: Public Transport Provision**

How will Devon County Council improve public transport provision to make it accessible and affordable for all its residents in order to reduce use of private cars and thereby reduce emissions?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD**

Devon County Council continues to maintain support for public transport in contrast to many other parts of the country. In 2019/20 it is financially supporting the public and community transport network to the tune of £5.8 million. This supports around 20% of the total bus network in the County. This is on top of the £9.3million budget fulfilling our statutory duty to provide the National Bus Pass.

Wherever possible our aim has been to maintaining the existing network and make use of available developer funding and other external sources to improve services around new developments, such as those East of Exeter. We aim thereby to encourage the public transport habit early on with Cranbrook being an example of this. Their bus service was recently increased to every 20 minutes through the day and this complements the train service from the local station. We work closely with the rail sector with more improvements to train services in Devon planned towards the end of this year.

Making public transport accessible and affordable for all residents of Devon implies a comprehensive enhancement of the network which is possible only in incremental stages, each of which requires substantial and long-term, if not permanent increased revenue funding. We have a finite budget to put towards this, but we continue to work with relevant stakeholders and our transport providers.

Public transport is more environment-friendly than the private car where passenger load factors are good. Through experience we are conscious that in spite of strong lobbying, people do not always take up the opportunity of using public transport where it is provided. There is no starker contrast than a string of private cars, each carrying one person, following a Euro 6 clean-engined bus. Public transport has difficulty in offering exactly the same door-to-door convenience as the car, but we can all make a positive contribution by using our local public transport services wherever possible and thereby helping make them cost-effective and more environment-friendly.

Employers can help by passing on sustainable travel advice to their staff. For large employers, our biggest bus company is willing to discuss discount fare schemes. Similarly, schools can encourage families to choose green travel options for their pupils.

Information about what services are available is important and, in partnership with Traveline, will very soon be in a position via the internet to offer instant real-time travel information from any bus stop in the County. With 78% of adults now using smartphones, we aim to ensure that everyone who wishes to consider the public transport option can do so easily. At the same time, we are maintaining our service of printed timetables for those who prefer them.

As for affordability there are currently a range of tickets available which offer lower costs than many people realise. Research suggests that value for money on a reliable and reasonably frequent service throughout the day is more important to people than simply a lower fare. Passenger satisfaction rates on Devon services are among the highest in the country. Stagecoach offer contactless payment on all of their buses. Thanks to County Council assistance, other bus companies are following suit and during the current year it should become possible on all daily bus services in the County to pay by contactless card.

## **7. QUESTION FROM NEMO JONES (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)**

### **Re: 5G Technology**

What assurances can the councillors give on the safety of 5G technology given that there are no studies proving its safety? Please provide evidence of the risk assessments carried out by DCC, the name of the risk assessor for environmental safety and, if different, the name of the person who is taking full responsibility for signing off on the 5G rollout. What public consultation is planned regarding the public's thoughts and feelings about being subjected to an absolutely massive increase in untested EMF activity? Are you aware that Brussels, Rome and other towns and areas have called a halt to the rollout based on the precautionary principal and the weight of evidence with many scientists around the world voicing the most serious concerns over this issue?

### **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

The County Council draws on the advice and guidance provided by Public Health England (PHE) regarding the health and safety of mobile technologies including 5G. PHE continues to monitor the health-related evidence applicable to radio waves, including in relation to base stations, and is committed to updating its advice as required. Their advice can be found by following this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health>

The County Council is also in contact with PHE following the concerns raised with us and we are seeking further advice from PHE.

Public Health England (PHE) advises the Government on appropriate public health standards for protection from exposure to radiofrequency electromagnetic fields (EMFs), or radio waves. PHE's main advice is that the guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) should be adopted and there is no convincing evidence that exposures below the ICNIRP guideline levels cause adverse health effects. ICNIRP is formally recognised as an official collaborating non-governmental organisation by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization. ICNIRP is also consulted by the European Commission. Advice from PHE includes comprehensive scientific review reports and statements on topics.

In terms of future deployments of mobile infrastructure and in particular 5G mobile it is our understanding that there are effectively two forms of 5G. The first will utilise sub 10GHz spectrum (operating in very similar frequencies to current 3G and 4G services). The second will utilise 24GHz -300GHz spectrum, the so-called millimetre wave frequencies associated with more revolutionary 5G aspects (such as 1-10Gbps+ speeds and low latency connections). All current UK 5G plans from mobile network operators are solely related to sub 10GHz spectrum technologies as this is currently the only spectrum that Ofcom has licenced. This spectrum has very similar characteristics to current mobile communications technologies that have been in use for 30 years, and some of this spectrum has also been previously granted for use by radio and TV broadcasts. When it comes to the higher frequency (millimetre wave)

spectrum, not only has Ofcom yet to set a date for auctioning this spectrum, the practical reality of using such spectrum's remains to be proven.

Ofcom is still consulting on the potential uses and auctions of millimetre wave spectrum and is expected to announce their plans for the first limited range of 26GHz spectrum later this year. However, it does not appear that Ofcom expects such spectrum to be used in traditional ways associated with mobile technologies.

The County Council is not involved with mobile infrastructure planning applications, this is a District Council responsibility as part of the planning authority remit. Where street furniture is concerned, we are not aware of any Council assets that are currently hosting mobile network operators 5G technologies, but we would review any such request from mobile network operators in accordance with Government guidance and PHE guidance.

As a County Council we have no current plans to make use of 5G in our ICT roadmap to 2020.

**8. QUESTION FROM TONI TURNER (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)  
Re: Health Effects of 5G Technology**

What evidence has DCC commissioned into the health effects of the introduction of 5G technology?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

As stated in the response to the previous question the County Council takes advice and guidance on this matter from Public Health England. Following the concerns raised with us, we have contacted PHE seeking further advice.

**9. QUESTION FROM IZABELLA FINCH (IN ATTENDANCE)  
Re: Duty of Care – 5G**

Regarding the 99,192 signatories of the 5G Space Appeal (<http://www.5gspaceappeal.org>) which states "RF radiation has been proven harmful for humans and the environment. The deployment of 5G constitutes an experiment on humanity and the environment that is defined as a crime under international law" and the 235 scientists and medical doctors of the EU 5G Appeal (<http://www.5gappeal.eu>) stating that the effects of RF-EMF exposure includes "increased cancer risk, cellular stress, increase in harmful free radicals genetic damages, structural and functional changes of the reproductive system, learning and memory deficits, neurological disorders and negative impacts on general well-being in humans." Are the DCC willing to acknowledge and take responsibility for its duty of care requirements to the community of Devonshire and in so doing immediately remove planned and installed 5g infrastructure?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

The County Council is not the body responsible for planning for mobile infrastructure, this is the responsibility of District Councils. As stated already where street furniture is concerned, we are not aware of any Council assets that are currently hosting mobile network operators 5G technologies but we would review any such request from mobile network operators in accordance with Government guidance and PHE guidance.

**10. QUESTION FROM ISABELLA LAZLO (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)  
Re: Roll Out of 5G in Devon**

In the context of the Governments current roll out of fifth generation wireless technology (5G), and the relaxation of planning laws to support swift implementation of infrastructure, is the honourable Council and all its members aware of the recent testimony by Dr Sharon Goldberg against the expansion of 5G at the Cell tower legislation hearing in Michigan State where she stated;

'Wireless radiation has biological effects. Period. This is no longer a subject for debate when you look at PubMed and the peer-review literature. These effects are seen in all life forms; plants, animals, insects, microbes. In humans, we have clear evidence of cancer now: there is no question. We have evidence of DNA damage, cardiomyopathy, which is the precursor of congestive heart failure, neuropsychiatric effects...5G is an untested application of a technology that we know is harmful; we know it from the science. In academics, this is called human subjects research' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CK0AliMe-KA>)

I ask that you demonstrate clearly to me how each of you are taking your role as community servants seriously in this instance and are doing all in your power to both research and halt any roll out of 5G in Devon. Failure to do so will cause the necessary delivery of personal Notices of Liability to all members of the council, holding you directly responsible for any harm caused through any roll out in Devon.

#### **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

The County Council takes advice on the health and safety impacts from mobile infrastructure from Public Health England (PHE). PHE advises the Government on appropriate public health standards for protection from exposure to radiofrequency electromagnetic fields (EMFs), or radio waves. As already stated, following the concerns raised with us we have contacted PHE seeking further advice. We are also engaged with Government and Ofcom on future plans for 5G and other fixed line broadband and mobile infrastructure deployments. In developing with Heart of the South West partners a Digital Strategy, which in part will focus on digital infrastructure, the County Council and its partners would fully take on board the latest research and advice on the health and well-being from PHE in considering mobile connectivity.

#### **11. QUESTION FROM MICHELLE HILLIARD (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)**

##### **Re: Risk Analysis Assessments - 5G**

Do the DCC have a copy of Environmental and/or Health and Safety and/or Risk Analysis Assessments relating to 5G inception? If so, we request that you send us copies.

#### **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

As already stated the County Council relies on the advice and evidence provided by Public Health England and does not have any specific documentation for the County. Following the concerns raised with us we have contacted PHE seeking further advice.

#### **12. QUESTION FROM MR NICHOLSON (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)**

##### **Re: Energy Efficient Public Transport**

How will DCC work with providers of public transport in Devon to make public transport energy-efficient and to promote the use of renewable energy generation to power it?

#### **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD**

There are a number of emerging alternative technologies being developed for bus propulsion. Recent years have seen trials and some wider introduction of hybrid, electric, bio-gas and hydrogen powered buses.

Many bus operators trialled hybrid diesel/electric buses. The popularity of these has been restricted by the cost of replacing the batteries, as up to three sets may be required over the life of a bus and disposal of the used batteries is difficult.

More recently electric (battery) powered buses have been ordered in a number of cities with funding from Government as part of the Ultra-low Emission bus scheme. The County Council did submit a bid with Stagecoach for electric buses for Exeter Park & Ride, which was unsuccessful. At the present stage of development electric buses have a limited number of applications in Devon, due to insufficient range.

Because of the length of routes operated and the hilly terrain Stagecoach primarily see many routes continuing to be operated by diesel buses. The latest Euro 6 standard produce a major improvement in air quality as buses must meet the requirement in real world testing, not just a theoretical trial. These tests show a reduction in NOx of 95% compared with a Euro V bus. The ability of Euro 6 buses to deliver an immediate improvement is also recognised in London, where the aspiration is that all buses will meet the standard by 2021.

This Council will work with operators to bid for future Ultra-low Emission bus scheme bidding rounds, although at present it seems areas needing to implement Clean Air Zones are being favoured. We will also monitor other developments, although at this time the additional costs involved make it unlikely that bus operators will be able to make these changes without funding to cover the difference in costs.

**13. QUESTION FROM JOHN KITSON (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)**

**Re: County Council position on 5G Roll-Out in Devon**

If the roll out of 5G (fifth generation wireless network) proceeds nationally - as planned and announced in principle by various telecommunications companies and the UK Government - will the Leader of the Council and the Members of the Council allow it to proceed in Devon?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

Devon County Council is only responsible for planning applications relating to the public highway/street furniture and would review any such application for telecommunication infrastructure in accordance with Government and Public Health England (PHE) guidance.