



QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC
Wednesday 10 July 2019

1. QUESTION FROM MR VINT (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)
Re: Climate Change and Fuel Poverty

The County Council is a signatory to the 'Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Declaration on Climate Change and Fuel Poverty' (2007). What was the fuel poverty level across Devon in 2007 and what is it now, what target dates and levels were in place for reducing fuel poverty across Devon and are the signatory councils on track for achieving these targets?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD

Devon County Council was a signatory to the joint Council declaration in 2007 and has regularly reported activity. The target set in 2007 to alleviate fuel poverty was to take as many households out of fuel poverty as possible. Fuel poverty levels are monitored and, working in partnership, the Council has a programme to reduce fuel poverty, as detailed below.

Fuel poverty rates are calculated by modelling household income and fuel costs. The government's methodology of calculating fuel poverty changed in 2011 making comparisons back to 2007 problematic. Data from 2011 through to 2017, the latest data available, is provided in the table below. The number and percentage of homes in fuel poverty has fluctuated due to changes to fuel prices and economic activity over the same period. These fluctuations make it difficult to see the effect of fuel-poverty alleviation schemes in the data.

Year	Devon CC	
	Count	%
2011	31,170	9.7%
2012	34,133	10.3%
2013	42,559	12.5%
2014	43,918	13.0%
2015	41,145	12.2%
2016	36,970	10.9%
2017	40,472	11.6%

The current national fuel poverty target, set in the Fuel Poverty Strategy for England, is to ensure that as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practical meet a minimum energy efficiency rating of Band C by 2030. The bands run from A to G, with G being the most inefficient. An analysis undertaken for Public Health Devon shows that 74% of homes in fuel poverty in Devon are rated Band D – G.

Between 2008 and 2017, Cosy Devon, a partnership of local authorities and community energy companies working to improve domestic energy-efficiency, partnered with Eon Energy to deliver measures in Devon through government's Carbon Emissions Reduction Target scheme and later the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) phase 1 and 2 schemes. These schemes

installed measures in 13, 500 homes at a cost of £5.5m and lifted 1,000 households out of fuel poverty.

Cosy Devon provides a free home energy advice visit to eligible residents via the Local Energy Advice Partnership (LEAP). The visit provides general energy saving advice and the installation of simple energy saving measures, such as draught proofing, light bulbs, chimney balloons and radiator panels. Advice is provided about grant assistance which is available to either cover the full or partial costs of installing heating and insulation measures. Grants are provided through the government's ECO phase 3 scheme combined with top-up funding from the Better Care Fund and dedicated budgets from district authorities. The LEAP also identifies people who may benefit from an income maximisation check; a referral can be made to an independent company who offers a free telephone service providing advice to people on how to increase their income and general money matters. Additionally, the home energy visit provides advice on fuel switching whereby householders are informed as to whether there is a cheaper energy deal available for them. If so they are given the option to switch at that time with the help of the energy advisor. Households can apply via www.cosydevon.com

In the past year, the LEAP has visited 1,153 households in administrative Devon and installed 9,791 energy-efficiency measures.

2. QUESTION FROM MR SCOTT (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)

Re: Assistance to City, District and Town Councils on Carbon Neutrality

What assistance will the County Council consider offering to those City, District and Town Councils in Devon that have now made commitments to be carbon neutral by 2030 - including matters relating to public transport, provision for cyclists and planning permission for renewable energy schemes in these locations?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD

City, District, Borough, Town and Parish councils have separate responsibilities to the County Council and will need to allocate their own resources to determine how they can use those responsibilities to contribute to the decarbonisation of Devon. These Councils are involved in the Devon Carbon Plan process and will be able to use outputs of the research and discussions that will take place at county level with their involvement, currently funded by the County Council and the University of Exeter, to inform plans for their local areas. Preparation of the Devon Carbon Plan will involve the matters you specifically identify. The County Council has arranged and funded training on carbon footprinting, to which the councils have been invited. The flow of assistance, cooperation and ideas will need to operate in both directions between local authorities – this is not an agenda that is solely the responsibility of the County Council – which is why the multi-agency Devon Climate Emergency Response Group has been established.

3. QUESTION FROM MS PONTON (NOT IN ATTENDANCE)

Re: Studies Commissioned on Expansion of Renewable Energy Sector

What studies have the County Council commissioned or been involved in producing over the last decade on the potential for expansion of the renewable energy sector in Devon, parts of Devon or the wider region - and for the capacity for community energy projects and local renewable energy production to provide for local energy needs, increase local employment, contribute to the local economy or provide an income for this council?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD

Devon County Council has been involved in many studies and projects in the last decade on the potential for renewable energy in Devon. Here we can provide an overview and some highlights.

Through Devon County Council's membership of Regen, a not-for-profit centre of energy expertise in Exeter, the authority contributed to the cost of the annual South West Renewable Energy Progress Report: Whilst this is no longer produced, the authority still commissions an annual Devon Renewable Energy Progress Report and funds 100% of the cost. Regen and Devon County Council jointly produced the Devon Community Impact Report in 2018 on behalf of the 23 community energy groups across the county; it shows how Devon is taking a leading role in the UK's community energy revolution and demonstrates the environmental, economic and social benefits that community energy projects are providing throughout the county.

Through projects such as the joint EU-funded Sustainable Energy Across the Common Space and the Community Energy Accelerator, the council has been directly supporting community energy since 2011.

The authority is also a member of the South West Energy and Environment Group, hosted by the Centre for Sustainable Energy at the University of Exeter. Through this Group, a number of public sector organisations collaborate on energy-related research and share the outcomes. In 2011 the Group undertook A Review of Renewable Energy Resource Assessment and Targets for Devon. Subsequent studies focussing on south west Devon and the North Devon Biosphere Reserve were completed in 2013. An evaluation of the potential for field-scale solar PV and wind turbines was included within the 2018 Low Carbon and Climate Change Evidence Base for the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan, covering Teignbridge, Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter City council areas.

All of these studies are available online via

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/energyandclimatechange/renewable-energy>

In addition, the authority has been involved in various studies to explore specifically the opportunity for district heating schemes in and around Exeter, Newton Abbot, Tiverton and Barnstaple. These studies led to the successful deployment of district heating at Cranbrook, Sky Park and Monkerton and the ongoing development of a city centre scheme for Exeter through Dextco <https://www.dextco.org.uk/>.

Furthermore a number of studies have looked at the renewable energy potential on the council's land holdings and buildings, the latest of which have been in 2016 and an update in 2018. These led to the community-owned solar PV arrays being installed on Great Moor House and Exeter Central Library. The cost of upgrades required to the local electricity distribution network has meant that deploying field-scale opportunities is problematic and funding opportunities are being pursued to try to address this.

Finally, a study is currently being drafted to identify the clean growth opportunities in Devon across a variety of sectors, including onshore and offshore renewable energy generation, which will be able to inform the emerging Local Industrial Strategy being developed by the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership.