

Impact Assessment



Assessment of: Devon County Council's Environmental Policy

Service: Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transportation

Head of Service: Meg Booth

Version / date of sign off by Head of Service: 16/5/22

Assessment carried out by (job title): Doug Eltham, Environment and Sustainability Policy Officer

1. Description of project / service / activity / policy under review

A review of Devon County Council's Environment Policy.

2. Reason for change / review

The currently-adopted version was prepared in 2011. It has stood the test of time but is now silent on various contemporary environmental issues, including marine plastics, the climate and ecological emergency and DCC's new strategic focus on green issues.

3. Aims / objectives, limitations and options going forwards (summary)

The Environmental Policy summarises how DCC will continue to lead by example to minimise the impact of its own operations and its supply chain on the environment and encourage others to do the same. Beneath the Environmental Policy sits a series of more detailed strategies and action plans against which progress can be measured and demonstrated.

4. People affected and their diversity profile

The Environmental Policy touches on every aspect of environmental management. The health of the environment affects everybody and therefore the review of the Environmental Policy will also affect everybody.

Poor environmental quality and resilience can impact some demographics more than others. These include less affluent people, those living with physical and mental health conditions and those living in coastal communities or other areas prone to flooding.

5. Stakeholders, their interest and potential impacts

The need to enhance environmental quality affects everybody's wellbeing in the county. Implementing the revised Environmental Policy will help grow efforts amongst other organisations to do the same.

The stakeholders directly affected by the revised Environmental Policy are the various service areas at Devon County Council who will need to continue to adhere to its objectives and improve their practices as appropriate.

6. Research used to inform this assessment

Learning from the Devon Climate Assembly and the Thematic Hearings used to inform the preparation of the Devon Carbon Plan have been helpful in preparing this assessment on the review of the Environmental Policy.

7. Description of consultation process and outcomes

This assessment has not been the subject of consultation. The review of the Environmental Policy has been subject to consultation with the internal Environmental Performance Management Group (which has officer representation from key service areas across the authority), the Environmental Performance Board and the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Climate Change Standing Overview Group.

8. Equality analysis

Giving Due Regard to Equality and Human Rights

The local authority must consider how people will be affected by the service, policy or practice. In so doing we must give due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Where relevant, we must take into account the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, race, and religion and belief. This means considering how people with different needs get the different services they require and are not disadvantaged, and facilities are available to them on an equal basis in order to meet their needs; advancing equality of opportunity by recognising the disadvantages to which protected groups are subject and considering how they can be overcome.

We also need to ensure that human rights are protected. In particular, that people have:

- A reasonable level of choice in where and how they live their life and interact with others (this is an aspect of the human right to 'private and family life').
- An appropriate level of care which results in dignity and respect (the protection to a private and family life, protection from torture and the freedom of thought, belief and religion within the Human Rights Act and elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations under the Equality Act 2010).
- A right to life (ensuring that nothing we do results in unlawful or unnecessary/avoidable death).
- The Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation does not prevent the Council from taking difficult decisions which result in service reductions or closures for example, it does however require the Council to ensure that such decisions are:
 - Informed and properly considered with a rigorous, conscious approach and open mind, taking due regard of the effects on the protected characteristics and the general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations.
 - Proportionate (negative impacts are proportionate to the aims of the policy decision)
 - Fair
 - Necessary
 - Reasonable, and
 - Those affected have been adequately consulted.

Characteristics	Potential or actual issues for this group. [Please refer to the Diversity Guide and See RED]	In what way will you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> eliminate or reduce the potential for direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or disadvantage, where necessary. advance equality (to meet needs/ensure access, encourage participation, make adjustments for disabled people, 'close gaps'), if possible. foster good relations between groups (tackled prejudice and promoted understanding), if relevant? In what way do you consider any negative consequences to be reasonable and proportionate in order to achieve a legitimate aim? Are you complying with the DCC Equality Policy ?
All residents (include generic equality provisions)	<p>Poor environmental quality has far reaching and profound implications for communities. The Environmental Policy aims to improve the situation.</p> <p>Implementing the Environmental Policy will encourage further action locally amongst other organisations to improve environmental quality.</p> <p>Potential or actual issues will be identified at the tactical-level as DCC's services respond to the revised Environmental Policy.</p>	<p>DCC aims to ensure that nobody's needs are overlooked during the descent to net-zero and that the wide-ranging opportunities to improve health, wellbeing and social justice are seized. This applies equally to all environmental issues.</p> <p>There will be opportunities to advance equality through the tactical-level changes to DCC's services and the action plans that sit beneath the Environmental Policy. These opportunities will need to undertake their own impact assessment to consider their effect on the equality characteristics of service users.</p>
Age	See above	See above
Disability (incl. sensory, mobility, mental health,	See above	See above

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learning disability, neurodiversity, long term ill health) and carers of disabled people		
Culture and ethnicity: nationality/national origin, ethnic origin/race, skin colour, religion and belief	See above	See above
Sex, gender and gender identity (including men, women, non-binary and transgender people), and pregnancy and maternity (including women's right to breastfeed)	See above	See above
Sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership	See above	See above
Other relevant socio-	See above	See above

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economic factors such as family size/single people/lone parents, income/deprivation, housing, education and skills, literacy, sub-cultures, 'digital exclusion', access to transport options, rural/urban		

9. Human rights considerations:

There are no human rights considerations arising from the review of the Environmental Policy in relation to the Human Rights Act (1998).

10. Supporting independence, wellbeing and resilience. Give consideration to the groups listed above and how they may have different needs:

In what way can you support and create opportunities for people and communities (of place and interest) to be independent, empowered and resourceful?

This will need to be considered at the tactical level as the Authority's services implement the reviewed Environmental Policy.

In what way can you help people to be safe, protected from harm, and with good health and wellbeing?

This will need to be considered at the tactical level as the Authority's services implement reviewed Environmental Policy.

In what way can you help people to be connected, and involved in community activities?

This will need to be considered at the tactical level as the Authority's services implement reviewed Environmental Policy.

11. Environmental analysis

An impact assessment should give due regard to the following activities in order to ensure we meet a range of environmental legal duties. The policy or practice does not require the identification of environmental impacts using this Impact Assessment process because it is subject to (please mark X in the relevant box below):

Devon County Council's Environmental Review Process	
Planning Permission	
Environmental Impact Assessment	
Strategic Environmental Assessment	

	Describe any actual or potential negative consequences. (Consider how to mitigate against these).	Describe any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes. (Consider how to improve as far as possible).
Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost:		The revised Environmental Policy advocates this approach.
Conserve and enhance wildlife:	Potential negative effects on wildlife from new technology and land use changes that could arise from some objectives of the Environmental Policy, however planning policies and procedures, environmental assessment regulations relating to agricultural land and constraints linked to grant funding mechanisms exist to avoid or minimise such impacts.	The revised Environmental Policy promotes the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.
Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's landscape:	Building a market for carbon offsets in Devon and the need for new technology will provide opportunities to introduce features into the landscape, such as trees, renewable energy and features associated with less intensive agricultural techniques. These will need to be managed appropriately, taking into account existing landscape quality and character.	The revised Environmental Policy promotes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of landscapes and the quality and distinctiveness of built environment, cultural and historic interests. • Plan positively to landscape changes arising from the climate & ecological emergency and socioeconomic pressures to help deliver sustainable development and land management. •
Conserve and enhance Devon's cultural and historic heritage:	Potential negative effects on the historic built environment from new technology, however planning policies and procedures exist to safeguard	The revised Environmental Policy promotes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of

	these.	landscapes and the quality and distinctiveness of built environment, cultural and historic interests.
Minimise greenhouse gas emissions:		Achieving a net-zero organisation by 2030 will minimise greenhouse gas emissions.
Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise):		<p>The revised Environmental Policy promotes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance biodiversity, air quality, soils & minerals, freshwater resources and estuarine & coastal waters to achieve a net-gain for the environment and to restore natural processes to provide services such as carbon storage and flood mitigation. • Ensure waste water is disposed of appropriately. • Suitably store, use and dispose of wastes and hazardous materials. • Reduce light pollution to reclaim dark skies by using new technology, dimming and removing lighting through public consultation.
Contribute to reducing water consumption:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and reduce its use of fresh water by cutting demand and improving efficiency in existing and new buildings.
Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level):		<p>The revised Environmental Policy promotes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure its services are resilient to extreme weather and are adapting to the changing climate.

12. Economic analysis

	Describe any actual or potential negative consequences. (Consider how to mitigate against these).	Describe any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes. (Consider how to improve as far as possible).
Impact on knowledge and skills:	None	There is considerable potential for environmental improvement and the enhancement of sustainable practices to create new skills requirements throughout Devon's economy.
Impact on employment levels:	Employment levels in carbon intensive and unsustainable sectors will decline, but these are expected to be outweighed by increased opportunities for employment in other sectors.	There is considerable potential for the transition to clean technologies and sustainable practices to create new jobs.
Impact on local business:	None	There are opportunities for Devon county Council to use its purchasing power to support environmental improvements by purchasing services from local companies. There is considerable potential for the transition to clean technologies and sustainable practices to increase economic prosperity – nationally and locally in Devon.

13. Describe the linkages or conflicts between social, environmental and economic impacts (Combined Impacts):

The impacts of poor environmental quality affect society, the environment and the economy. Focussing efforts to improve environmental quality will minimise the effects and create a fairer, healthier, more resilient and more prosperous society. Implementation of the revised Environmental Policy must be aligned with goals for public health improvement, green growth and the reduction of social vulnerability.

14. How will the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area be improved through what is being proposed? And how, in conducting the process of procurement, might that improvement be secured?

See 13. There is no procurement activity involved with the review of the Environmental Policy.

15. How will impacts and actions be monitored?

Individual projects arising from the revised Environmental Policy will need to monitor their impact on social, economic and environmental indicators. The Authority's Environmental Performance Statement will be updated regularly to monitor the performance of the Policy, and the Devon and Torbay State of Environment Report will be used to monitor the changing condition of Devon's environment.