

Revising Devon County Council's Energy and Carbon Strategy

Paper to Devon County Council's Corporate, Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee – Climate Change Standing Overview Group (SOG)

1. Purpose

This paper presents recommendations from the University of Exeter on the development and operation of the Devon Net-Zero Citizens' Assembly.

The final design will be decided by the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group.

The SOG is invited to review the recommendations and provide comments for Phil Norrey, Devon County Council's representative on the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group.

2. Background

The Devon Net-Zero Citizens' Assembly is being convened in order to discuss and generate recommendations to feed into the Devon Carbon Plan which will set the course of action across Devon for reducing carbon emissions to net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest.

The recommendations from the University of Exeter are presented in a report that has draws on a variety of sources including peer-reviewed academic literature, 'grey' literature (i.e. reports produced by practitioners, think tanks or expert organisations in public involvement that are not peer-reviewed), and official documentation, evaluations and reports produced by previous citizens' assemblies. It also draws on the helpful advice and comments provided by a group of experts who attended a workshop on the design of the citizens' assembly that was held at the University on 14th November 2019 (this included representation from environmental groups, such as Extinction Rebellion).

Due to the time required to appoint recruitment and facilitation services for the citizens' assembly, recruit the members and avoid school holidays, it is expected that the assembly will start its sessions in May 2020.

3. The Report's Recommendations

These recommendations arise from the rapid review of evidence and a stakeholder workshop conducted at the University of Exeter. Each summary recommendation is followed by the report section number where the full recommendation with accompanying actions can be found (See Appendix 1 to this paper).

Oversight and Accountability (Section 2.1)

- The **Devon Climate Emergency Response Group** should have oversight and ultimate responsibility for the operation of the citizens' assembly.

- The **Devon Net-Zero Task Force**, as an independent body, should decide **how many** and **which witnesses to call**, following the guidance outlined in this document.
- The Devon Climate Emergency **Secretariat** (currently Devon County Council's Environment Group) should organise the assembly's delivery, including procurement of recruitment and facilitation services in close liaison with the Devon Net-Zero Task Force.
- A **Chair** should be recommended by the Devon Net-Zero Task Force and appointed by the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group to oversee the process and be present at all Assembly sessions.
- The **witnesses** called to give evidence should be diverse. This includes researchers and academics, representatives of stakeholder organisations and individuals with personal, lived experience of the issues under consideration.
- Assembly sessions should be **conducted in private**, with observers and evaluators present, and are recorded and live-streamed.
- The Task Force should be transparent about **how it has used the recommendations** of the Citizens' Assembly in writing the Devon Carbon Plan. Where its recommendations are not taken up in the Carbon Plan, the reasons for this should be clearly explained by the Task Force. (Section 2.9)

Which question should be deliberated upon? (Section 2.2)

- **How can we achieve a net-zero Devon as rapidly and as fairly as possible?** Responding to this, participants could be encouraged to register their informed opinions on: WHO needs to act; WHAT actions need to be taken by each of these groups/ levels; WHERE these actions should take place; and WHEN actions should be taken.

Who should take part?

- Participants should be aged **16 years and over** and be **representative of the entire Devon population** according to demographic characteristics. (Section 2.3)
- **100 citizens** should be recruited to participate in the first instance, with the expectation that some will drop out over the course of the Assembly meetings due to natural attrition (e.g. illness). (Section 2.4)
- Participants should be provided with a **£100 day rate** and **associated travel and childcare costs** should be paid. (Section 2.5)

How should deliberation be conducted?

- We recommend that the assembly meet in **different locations** that are representative of different areas in the county (for example Barnstaple, Plymouth, Exeter and Tavistock).
- We recommend that the assembly meets on **four separate days at weekends over a seven-week period**. (Section 2.6)
- Written and verbal **information** should be provided to all participants in varied formats, employing **ethical guidelines**. (Sections 2.7 and 2.8)

- The authorship of information presented to the assembly should be clearly cited (e.g. arising from the Thematic Hearings, submitted evidence, specific research studies) so that the **rigour of information presented is assured of its quality**. (Sections 2.7 and 2.8)
- Discussion should be structured around different formats and with **professional facilitation**. (Sections 2.7 and 2.8)
- Participants should have the opportunity to **vote on preferred actions** and recommendations.
- The **wellbeing** of participants should be taken in to account through various support mechanisms. (Section 2.7)
- Enhancing the legitimacy of the process requires dedicated communicative actions to ensure **transparency with the wider public**. (Section 2.11)

How should the Assembly be monitored?

- Monitoring **and evaluation is essential in order to signal the legitimacy of the process, and to learn and share lessons**. This requires consent for and participation in various methods of data collection. (Section 2.9)
- We recommend that the **Devon Net Zero Citizens' Assembly is rigorously monitored** and has sufficient resources to track the process and its outcomes across time. (Section 2.9)
- We recommend that the **Evaluation Report is published online and shared across stakeholders, witnesses and citizen participants**, as well as with any other body or organisation outwith Devon. (Section 2.9)

4. Next Steps

At its next meeting on the 18th December, the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group will consider the University's recommendations and collectively agree the design of the Devon Net-Zero Citizens' Assembly.

Procurement of the recruitment and facilitation services will commence in the New Year.

Appendix 1 – The Full Report from the University of Exeter

See attached document.