

Dear councillors' clerks and residents

Please find my March report below:

Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund Arrangements

Dorset Council made a bid to receive funds from the DLUHC Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund to deliver nutrient mitigation within the Poole Harbour catchment. This mitigation will enable development to take place by offsetting the increase in nutrient loading on the Poole Harbour protected site. This will help to meet the Council's priorities of Protecting our natural environment, climate and ecology, Driving economic prosperity, and Creating sustainable development and housing. It will also help in creating stronger healthier communities through the provision of housing to meet needs

High levels of nutrients in Poole Harbour are resulting in increased algal growth within the harbour leading to a loss of biodiversity and to the harbour's unfavourable condition. Nutrient loading is primarily from agriculture but there is also a significant proportion from urban wastewater. The increase in population within the catchment is making the situation worse and an overall reduction in nutrient loading is needed to bring the harbour back into a favourable condition.

Dorset has been awarded £4.63 Million to help provide this off set. This will be used in part for land purchase and rewilding schemes in the area. Off set will be a requirement of all residential development which is part of the Poole Harbour Catchment area and this covers nearly all of the Chalk Valleys Ward. Individuals or Developers looking to build in this area should be aware of this additional cost to their schemes.

Local Development Scheme Update

At the start of the new unitary Dorset Council in 2019 the intention was to start a new Local Plan using the existing information and agreed plans from the District Councils. However, after a period of consultation and excellent engagement from the public with over 9000 responses, it was agreed that this would not work for Dorset people. Added to the mix there was work needed to consider flood alleviation in Weymouth, a review of gypsy and traveller sites and further information required from Natural England on nutrient mitigation before the plan could progress. In the recent Levelling up and Regeneration act there has been a change in the way councils are required to provide a Local Plan, streamlining the process. The fact that Dorset is in an election year will also restrict the speed in which a plan can progress in the next few months. The new process will help the council to develop the Local Plan and it is anticipated that the plan will be completed in 2026 to go the inspectors and should be in place by 2027.

Grid Capacity

A council working group has been looking at the serious issues in the Dorset council area of grid capacity and electricity supply. The real problem is we do not have sufficient capacity in the main carrier cables to bring the power we need into Dorset. We are told that any upgrade to this system is not likely until 2038. It is something we are raising with our local MP's and asking them to bring pressure in central government. But in the short term we must be looking to encourage greater local solar and wind provision in new development and as retrofit, as well as bigger solar and wind farms to provide energy locally. It is shocking to see how little publicity this issue has had in Dorset, but you may notice that energy companies on the radio are already looking to provide discounted energy to people using less energy at peak times by not using their hair dryers, tumble dryers and washing machines etc. It is affecting future development and I know some places where developers have fitted air source heat pumps to new properties only to have to replace them with gas boilers and there is no grid capacity. The lack of grid capacity is also affecting businesses and if they cannot get a sufficient supply may have to move out of the area which we need to avoid if at all costs.

Green Energy Awards

Dorset Council were top council across the UK at the prestigious Green Energy Awards in Bristol.

Over the last few years we've taken huge steps to reduce our carbon emissions across Dorset.

Here's a glimpse at what won us the award:

- making our buildings more eco-friendly through energy-saving upgrades like solar panels and heat pumps
- giving out a whopping £6 million in grants to community groups and business to help them cut emissions and costs
- helping households across Dorset to adopt energy-saving measures