

OUR APPROACH

The Strategy

This document sets out the framework for action to become a carbon-neutral Council and the direction of travel needed for a County-wide approach. There will be many ways in which we can meet our goals and many technological and policy developments along the way. We will, therefore, need to remain flexible and review our strategy regularly to ensure we take account of the latest developments.



Figure 2

This document explores several topics where we know action needs to be taken. These include Transport, Buildings, Waste, Water, Natural Assets, Economy, and Food and Drink. A section on each of these topics sets out the key challenges and some suggested priority areas for action. From this strategy and consultation with the public, we have developed more detailed action plans and will engage with partners, organisations, and individuals to encourage wider action beyond Dorset Council. Each section is supported by a separate more detailed background paper, providing some of the wider context and rationale.

We will monitor and report progress bi-annually against both our strategy, action plans and carbon budgets, as well as with those of the



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Figure 3

wider county, to ensure enough progress is being made or where greater focus is required to keep us on track. Our action plans will be living documents that will be regularly updated to account for progress, availability of resources and changes in policy and technology. The strategy itself will be reviewed, either if it becomes clear that enough progress is not being made against the targets, or when the actions are largely complete and new ones need to be established.

We will also strengthen our understanding and approach to risks of climate change, adaptation and resilience, as well as explore ways to improve our carbon data to include wider greenhouse gas emissions beyond carbon dioxide. (see Making it Happen)

Dorset Council's role

We are committed to achieving a carbon-neutral Council by 2040 and must help facilitate the changes required to work towards the whole of Dorset becoming carbon-neutral by 2050.

However, we recognise that Dorset Council has only limited powers and responsibilities in many of the areas where action is required. Therefore, Dorset organisations and individuals will all need to act collectively to achieve this wider ambition.

The Council has three key roles in facilitating the change required and the strategy document is framed into these three key areas...

Direct

Take **DIRECT** action to reduce our own carbon footprint in order to become a carbon-neutral Council by 2040, showing leadership as a large public sector organisation.

As a large organisation, we directly account for at least 1% of Dorset's footprint from our use of energy and water in our buildings and assets, staff travel, and the waste we produce.

Indirect (through services)

Take **INDIRECT** action to facilitate change by ensuring the range of services we provide across the County are delivered in a way that supports our journey towards a Carbon Neutral County.

Dorset Council is responsible for the delivery of many key services, such as planning, housing, economic development, waste and transport, etc.

Influence & Partnership

Work in **PARTNERSHIP** with other organisations and communities to drive change across the County and put in place larger programmes and projects to support fundamental change required.

For example - Working with towns and parishes, community engagement, behaviour change, regional transport policy. This is as well as working with key partners and existing partnerships (LNP, LEP, AONB, Coast Forum etc.), therefore influencing key and sustainable energy strategies.

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Lobbying

Critically, much of what is required will need to be led by national government through clear policy and support programmes (including financial incentives). At present, the Climate Change Act sets a clear target for net zero by 2050. However, the Committee on Climate Change has highlighted that many areas of government policy do not yet align to achieve this, or set out a clear long-term approach, and in some cases act as barriers to action. Therefore, the policy will need to be aligned in several key areas to include housing standards, planning, building control, transport, waste, and energy.

The Council has a key role in lobbying government for clear policy and financial support required for the transition to a zero-carbon future and to actively participate in national forums and consultations on policy development.

An integrated approach

Both the climate and ecological emergency are intrinsically interlinked, and both are crucial to our health and wellbeing. Changes in either will have knock-on effects on our physical health, sense of wellbeing, and safety. We rely on the natural systems for our very survival, such as food and energy, clean air, and water. However, our use of fossil fuels,

which leads to greenhouse gas emissions, is having an impact on the natural world, effecting ecosystems around the globe. By addressing one of these emergencies, we also address the other and we would wish to strive for integrated solutions.

We must also recognise that climate change is already happening and, even if we are successful in drastically curbing carbon emissions in Dorset, nationally and across the world, climate change will continue to impact on our lives. We therefore need to build resilience to current and future climate change as an integral part of our overall approach. Throughout this strategy, we highlight many of these issues and key areas of action that are required to adapt to climate change.

Our approach to achieving carbon neutrality must also be integrated within wider sustainability goals. Many of the actions required to tackle carbon emissions will have wider co-benefits, which will help to support and strengthen Dorset's local economy and address social issues, such as fuel poverty. This is in addition to having wider benefits for health and mental wellbeing, such as improving air quality, encouraging active travel, and encouraging healthy diets.

“Only by addressing both ecosystems and climate do we stand a chance of safeguarding a stable planet for humanity’s future on Earth.”

Prof Johan Rockström
Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany

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Health & Wellbeing



Climate change poses numerous risks to health and wellbeing. The World Health Organisation estimates an increase of 250,000 excess deaths per year between 2030 and 2050, due to the impacts of climate change. These impacts include heat-related mortality, increases in diseases, such as dengue fever and malaria, increased respiratory illness, and mortality due to extreme weather events. Indirect health impacts include illness relating to food and water safety, under-nutrition related to food insecurity, skin cancer, and chronic kidney disease from dehydration.

The lesser-known and often overlooked effects of climate change include the impacts on mental health. Mental health refers not just to mental illness, but also includes states of emotional resilience and feelings of wellbeing. There is increasing evidence that extreme weather events, which are more frequent, intense, and complex under

a changing climate, can trigger mental health disorders. These disorders include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depressive disorder (MDD), anxiety, depression, survivor guilt, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts.

Incremental climate changes, such as rising temperatures, rising sea levels, and increased drought can disrupt food and water resources, weaken infrastructure, and give rise to financial and relationship stress. This is as well as increased risks of violence, aggression, and the displacement of entire communities.

Impact of Climate Change on Physical, Mental, and Community Health

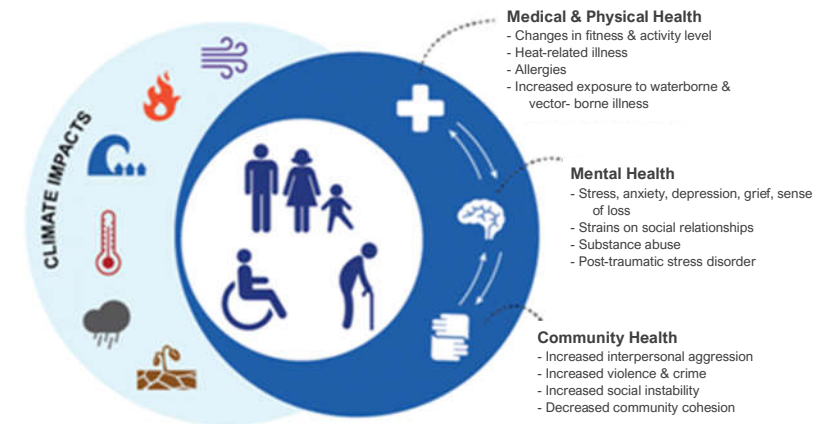


Figure 5

Paradoxically, these same disastrous implications may also inspire altruism, compassion, and optimism. In addition, it may also foster a sense of meaning and personal growth (otherwise referred to as post-traumatic growth), as people band together to salvage, rebuild, and console amongst the chaos and loss of a changing climate.

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Health and wellbeing benefits are some of the largest potential gains from tackling the climate and ecological emergency.

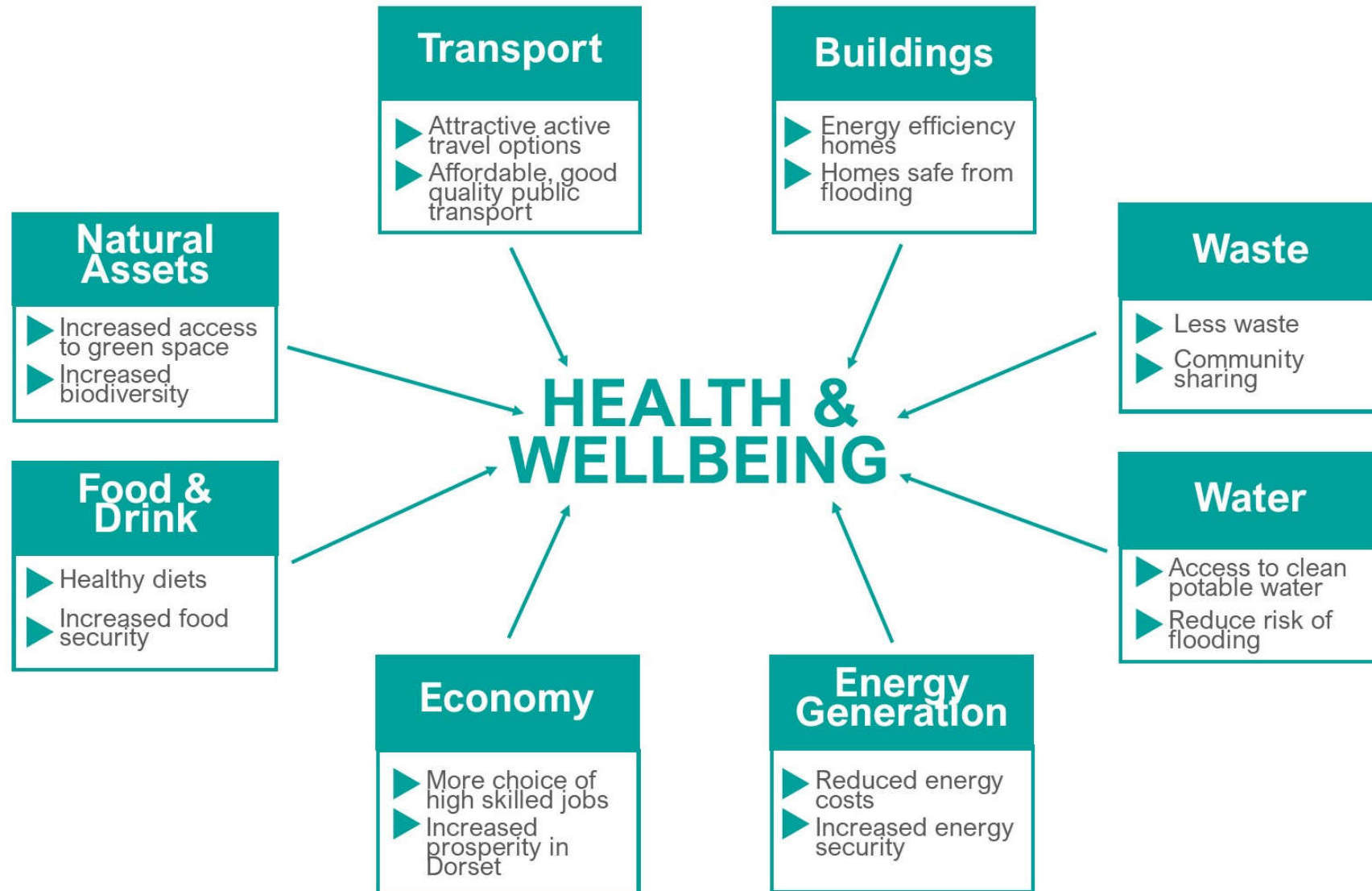


Figure 6

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Good quality natural landscapes, which have a high ecological value, have also been shown to reduce stress and sadness, lift poor mood, and make us feel better, with the relationship being strongest for anxiety disorder and depression. People living in greener urban areas have significantly higher life satisfaction scores than those that live in less green areas. Exercising in green spaces is also associated with higher levels of mental health and wellbeing compared to indoor physical activity. Moreover, older people who engage in walking as a physical activity are less likely to develop dementia. Therefore, there is undoubtedly a positive relationship between improving biodiversity, quality of greenspace, and accessibility for health and wellbeing.



In terms of physical health, our use of our natural world, particularly greenspace, is associated with lower rates of disease, reduced risk of developing type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. People who frequently visit high quality green space are more likely to be physically active and less likely to be overweight or obese. From the ancient Japanese practice of shinrin-yoku (forest walking) to the Yorkshire industrialist Titus Salt's factory placement, the health benefits of green spaces have been known across the world for time immemorial.

