

Responding to the climate emergency and moving to a net-zero carbon future

Our climate is changing

Our climate is changing as a result of greenhouse gas emissions, including carbon dioxide and methane. Globally, three quarters of greenhouse gas emissions come from fossil fuels and industrial processes, while agricultural practices such as livestock farming, forest felling and peatland destruction account for much of the rest.



In Mid Devon the most significant emissions come from on-road transportation (30%), closely followed by agriculture (29%) and buildings (26%). The emission of greenhouse gases is having a profound effect on weather patterns, and can result in more frequent and extreme events such as high temperatures, drought, heavy rainfall or storms. These events in turn have potential to impact adversely on Mid Devon's economy (e.g. farming and food production), infrastructure, buildings and its communities in terms of cost through damage and disruption and also on our health.

The Interim Devon Carbon Plan states that a series of national temperature records were broken in 2019 including the hottest ever UK recorded temperature (38°C). In the South West, winter precipitation increased by 15.9% between 1961 and 2006. A 2°C of global warming is likely to result in an increase in median winter precipitation of up to 20%. In the summer, precipitation is likely to decrease with median reductions of up to 30%. We will therefore see a move towards warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers.



How Plan Mid Devon can tackle climate change and its impacts

There is a statutory duty on the Council to include policies in the new Local Plan to tackle climate change and its impacts. For example, new development should be planned for in ways that can reduce its carbon footprint and help make it resilient to climate impacts by:






-  facilitating active travel by making sure that cycling and walking are available as the 'default' modes of transport, rather than 'designing in' a reliance on car-based travel
-  increasing the use of, and access to, high quality public transport

Climate emergency

In May 2019 Devon County Council agreed to declare a 'Climate Emergency' and to initiate a county-wide partnership to ensure Devon becomes Carbon Neutral by 2050. This means that the total carbon emitted by the county as a whole will need to be balanced out through an equivalent amount of carbon savings. Mid Devon District Council formally signed up to the Devon Climate Declaration in June 2019, but will aim to become carbon neutral by the more ambitious date of 2030.

In 2020, the Council produced its own Climate Action Plan. While this has focused on the Council's own activities (such as its use of energy and its housing stock and leisure facilities) it also includes a commitment to update the Local Plan to include ambitious climate policies.



-  avoiding increased vulnerability to flood risk to people and property
-  helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions through its location, orientation and design
-  including design measures to avoid overheating in extreme hot weather, such as encouraging use of materials which maximise sunlight reflection and increasing areas of blue and green infrastructure
-  providing access to, and support and encourage the use of new technologies and digital communications
-  increasing the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy