Tackling the Climate & Ecological Emergency

We'd like to know what you think about our draft Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.

The strategy presents eight key areas for action to help us become carbon neutral (i.e. save more carbon than we produce) by 2040, and across the whole Dorset Council area by 2050.

We have also set out actions in our overall approach and how we intend to make it happen via leadership, funding, communications and progress reporting.

We're currently gathering feedback from residents, organisations and partners to help develop our plans to achieve a carbon neutral Dorset. It will impact the way we all work and live, so please do have your say too.

Welfare checks to support Dorset residents through COVID-19

Residents who have been told they must self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace are to receive welfare checks from Dorset Council and partners in the community response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

From Monday 12 October calls will be made soon after residents have been told they need to self-isolate because they may be infected with the virus.

The aim of the welfare checks is to make sure people have support in place so they can self-isolate safely.

What is self-isolation?

Self-isolation is when you do not leave your home because you have or might have coronavirus (COVID-19). It means:

- do not go to work, school or public places – work from home if you can
- do not go on public transport or use taxis
- do not go out to get food and medicine – order it online or by phone, or ask someone to bring it to your home
- do not have visitors in your home, including friends and family – except for people providing essential care
- do not go out to exercise – exercise at home or in your garden, if you have one

If you have symptoms or have tested positive for coronavirus, you'll usually need to self-isolate for at least 10 days.

You'll usually need to self-isolate for 14 days if:

- you've been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace
- someone you live with has symptoms or tests positive
- someone in your support bubble has symptoms or tested positive

Find more information about when to self-isolate and what to do

Cllr Laura Miller, Dorset Council Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health said:

"It is vitally important that people self-isolate when told to do so by NHS Test and Trace as this helps stop the virus spreading to other people.

"I understand that people will find this difficult for lots of reasons, but that's why we're making these calls.

"We will check you are able to get hold of food and medicine, and help set up support for you if you can't."

Sam Crowe, Director of Public Health for Dorset and BCP Councils said:

"You may be told by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate or develop COVID-19 symptoms and have to self-isolate.

"Self-isolation means just that.

"You cannot leave your home unless you are taking yourself to have a COVID-19 test.

"This means not going to the shops or going out for exercise.

"I would encourage residents to have a plan in place in case you need to self-isolate.

"Talk to your friends and family to ask if they can deliver food and medicines to you.

"If you do not have a network of people you can rely on, then support is available."

How will the welfare checks work?

The person making the call will assess the resident's individual support needs. If a resident is vulnerable or doesn't have friends, family or neighbours nearby who can help to access food and/or prescriptions, they can be assigned a volunteer to help them get the things they need.
Referrals can also be made to access priority supermarket delivery slots and, if the person is on a low income, advice will be given about accessing the new Test and Trace support payment.
Phone calls will also be backed up by emails to ensure offers of support get through.

Need help now?

If you are already staying at home because of COVID-19 and don't have family, friends or a support network that can help get the things you need, we can help you.

- Tell us what you need using our online form
- Call our helpline on 01305 221000 8.30am -5pm, Monday to Friday
- Or find support in your local area through the Help and Kindness website

As the repercussions of COVID-19 continue, we know more people are finding themselves in financial difficulty. If you are worried about your job or your ability to pay your rent, mortgage or other bills, find information and advice that could help on our Reaching Out pages.

More about NHS Test and Trace

NHS Test and Trace service works in two ways.

It notifies a person that they have had a confirmed test for coronavirus and advises on their requirement to isolate.

It also contacts those who have been in close contact with the confirmed case and informs them of the need to self-isolate.

Libraries and TICs continue key services throughout lockdown

In line with Government regulations, Dorset Council's libraries and Tourist Information Centres (TICs) across the county have now closed until Wednesday 2 December.

But many services will still be provided during the lockdown period, including the Order & Collect book service which allow all library members to order up to 10 items per library card from your selected preference, chosen by us.

Dorset Libraries have had over 3,000 orders since we launched the Order & Collect service in July. This amounted to around 400 per week in July when libraries were closed, although this number obviously dropped off once libraries started to re-open.

Customer comments included: *"I picked up our Order & Collect on Monday. Thank you both so much, it can't have been easy choosing for a 12 and 15-year-old as the eldest can be picky! Only one duplicate (read before) in each of our three orders so well done. Highly recommend the service, next best thing to the library being open. Thanks again."*

Another customer noted: "Thank you for our books! We used your online service and collected today. So much fun to open the bags and see what you'd picked for me and my eight-year-old, and they all look great. We can't wait to get reading! It feels like a real treat to have lovely librarians selecting books for us"

This is what's happening over the coming few weeks: –

Libraries:

- Customers can continue to access online resources and virtual activities and events
- All 23 of our libraries will continue with the Order & Collect book service (non-contact collection service for pre-selected books). People can order online or by calling 01305 228400
- We will continue with the Home Library Service (non-contact doorstep drops) to people who are housebound – this will be provided by volunteers and Council employees
- There is no public access to library buildings for browsing or public computer use
- Items can be returned to the libraries via the letterboxes outside each building.

Tourist Information Centres (TICs):

- All face to face services at our 3 TICs (Dorchester, Sherborne and Wareham) have been suspended
- We will continue to provide an email/phone enquiry service. Contact details can be found online.

Cllr. Jill Haynes, Dorset Council's Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Communities, said:

"It's a shame we've had to close our libraries and tourist information centres again, especially since some locations have only just reopened in recent months, but we must observe the latest lockdown restrictions.

However, our dedicated employees are doing everything they can to continue providing some key services over the coming weeks that we hope will make things a little easier for our loyal customers and visitors.

I was very pleased that, during the last lockdown, our Libraries Team saw a significant growth in customers accessing our facilities using our online resources and services and this is something we want to encourage as we move ever more into a digital world. It's very important for our young people and some our more vulnerable residents, and we must enable people to access materials to support emotional and mental well-being at this difficult time.

We'll reopen as soon as we're able to, and I want to thank everyone for their continued patience and understanding."

Household Recycling Centres across Dorset to remain open during lockdown

All 10 of Dorset Council's Household Recycling Centres (HRCs, or "the tip") will remain open daily during the latest lockdown period, but restrictions will apply on site.

Latest government guidance puts strong restrictions on travel to help reduce non-essential journeys. Therefore, householders should only take waste to a HRC if it cannot be stored safely at home and no alternative disposal options are available.

All recycling centres will be open from 10am to 4pm daily. Visitors should expect queues to access HRCs due to social distancing measures limiting the amount of people we can have on site at any one time.

Visitors should expect queues to access HRCs due to a reduction in the number of available parking bays, aiding with social distancing and limiting how many people we can have on site at any one time. Re-use areas will be closed to reduce contact with items and encourage visitors to leave quickly after waste has been dropped off.

All usual waste types will continue to be accepted, including garden waste. Site staff will be unable to assist with carrying items. While face-coverings are not mandatory, visitors should always comply with social distancing guidance on-site, washing their hands both before and after they visit.

To help reduce the need to travel to HRCs, householders should continue to maximise the use of their kerbside waste and recycling collection services. You can always put out additional recycling, glass and food waste at the kerbside provided it is separated properly and placed in sturdy containers that can be easily and comfortably lifted by one person.

Further information can be found on the Dorset Council website.

Cllr. Jill Haynes, Dorset Council's Portfolio Holder for Customer, Community and Regulatory Services, said:

"I'm pleased that we will be keeping our household recycling centres open during this lockdown period, but it's important that everyone understands that we are not operating a "business as usual" service.

We are urging everyone to ask themselves if their "trip to the tip" is necessary now. Please consider whether popping into a HRC on your way to the shops to drop off a single bag of garden or household waste is a responsible use of the service and your time. If you can keep your waste at home without it causing risk of injury, health or harm, please do so until restrictions are relaxed once again.

I'd like to thank everyone for their patience and understanding. By everyone working together, we can keep our HRCs open for those who need them – it's one less thing to worry about during these difficult times."

Dreaming of a greener winter

This year, a route-based forecasting system will be used to decide when and where to salt the gritting network – down to the exact routes needing treatment.

Route-based forecasting will more accurately consider local conditions. Using weather forecasting information from MeteoGroup, which includes data from the council's 11 roadside weather stations, individual decisions will be made for each of the 22 routes in the Dorset Council area.

This significantly more targeted approach will reduce emissions from fewer lorry movements, it will use less rock salt, which is a finite resource, and it will save money by reducing the number of gritting runs needed.

Cllr Ray Bryan, Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment, said: "The road network we monitor and treat over the winter is not changing, but the way we make gritting decisions is.

"Previously, gritting routes were put into four 'domains' with an entire domain being treated following a forecast of low road surface temperatures anywhere in that area.

"We will now receive a forecast for each individual route; this route-based system would have saved 110 lorry movements, at least 880 tonnes of salt and £20,000 last winter.

"A route-based approach to gritting will also help us move towards dynamic spreading, where a variable spread-rate of salt can be used on the same route; bringing further environmental benefits and monetary savings."

Loading a gritter at Charminster Depot

From 1 November to 31 March, Dorset Highways run a 24-hour on call rota to ensure roads can be gritted any time of day or night throughout the depths of winter, keeping drivers travelling safely.

Salt is stocked up ahead of the winter period, with 13,500 tonnes of salt stored across five highways depots, ready for the colder weather to arrive.

Roads included in the 22 main gritting routes are those used by the majority of the travelling public. They cover 684 miles and account for around 28 per cent of the Dorset Council road network.

Where prolonged cold weather is forecast, additional community routes are also treated to ensure more rural communities can continue to travel safely.

Dorset Highways carries out gritting on the A35 trunk road on behalf of Highways England. This can often be at different times to the Dorset Council network.