LTP4 Consultation Response by DCAN

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19th October 2025

Overall Vision

Dorset Climate Action Network supports the vision of a cleaner, safer, and more inclusive transport system and urges Dorset Council to commit to firm requirements, measurable targets, and real investment in people-centred transport in the Local Transport Plan (LTP).

LTP Strategy Document

The Strategy Document is based around 6 key objectives (Climate & Environment, Health, Employment, Safety, Resilience and Accessible/inclusivity) each with 3-5 policies. DCAN supports the overall objectives which contain many of the things we would like to see in a modern transport system: “better safety”, “more frequent buses” and “shorter journey times.” However, the list of policies needs prioritisation so that limited resources can be applied to the most effective areas.

LTP Implementation Plan

The Implementation is based around the 6 objectives and how they may be implemented in 5 geographic areas: the BCP Council region and four areas in the Dorset Council region. Each has a 15-year delivery plan. These plans lack concrete proposals except in a minority of cases. As well as work already in progress – like more EV chargers, more e-bikes, minor traffic management improvements, and hopes for improved bus services, the Plan lacks ambition. The Plan should aim to solve some of our pressing current transport problems, address the fundamental challenge of greenhouse emissions and support material growth in the county.

The online consultation just allowed a single rating of the plan in each area with only one opportunity at the end for freeform comments. In addition, no comments at all are invited on the other important sections such as the prioritisation and monitoring. This shows a disappointing lack of trust by the council. Much greater involvement in the details and prioritisation of the implementation plan in each area should have been invited by local people through Town and Parish councils and community organisations such as the Transport Action Groups.

General Comments on the Policy Areas

1. Climate and Environment. We agree with the aspirations for a stronger link with the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy (NECES). We welcome the drive to improve EV charging points, transition to electric buses, decarbonisation of freight and the introduction of greener routes. Targets are needed to ramp up the

electric charging infrastructure to make it accessible to all sectors of society as all new cars will be hybrid or fully electric by 2030. Any drive towards lower emissions needs also to consider supporting behavioural changes and moving people towards lower emissions public transport. So, the link with active travel and a vastly improved public transport network is essential.

2. Climate and Health. Transport is one of Dorset's largest source of carbon emissions and air pollution. Tackling this is inseparable from improving public health. There need to be annual targets for emission reductions from transport including use of low-impact materials and green corridors in all highway and active travel projects. Walking and cycling can be promoted as preventative public health measures, in partnership with NHS Dorset and Public Health Dorset.

3. New Developments. The LTP lacks a critical link between new developments and the transport infrastructure required to support them. The draft Local Plan supports major housing and employment growth without any robust transport demand management plan thus risking even more car use and further congestion. New developments need to be designed from the very start with active travel and public transport at their heart and ideally need to be placed near existing public transport routes. Housing developments are not automatically "sustainable" just because they are built close to existing towns and villages. In addition to new developments, existing towns and villages also need to have robust plans for becoming pleasanter, greener and more "sustainable" places to live.

4. Cars, Roads and Behavioural Changes. A strong road network is essential for the prosperity of a modern economy. However, in recent years, Dorset has suffered with very high levels of congestion which brings large parts of the county to its knees, wasting billions and hampering economic development and growth in the county. Yet, building more road infrastructure is not the answer as this just encourages the car culture and ends up attracting more and more traffic. The way out of this is through fundamental changes to the way we plan and implement our urban environments with a greater emphasis on public transport, active travel and behavioural changes. Urban environments which are designed from the ground upwards with these principles in mind are pleasanter and less stressful places to live. Part of the transition away from the car-led economy is the promotion of car sharing and car clubs. These not only provide a cheaper alternative to the tens of thousands of people who have no access to a car but also reduce the need for second cars in many family units. The transport plan requires structure and resources to market and promote such schemes and there need to be reserved spaces for shared car schemes in all new developments.

5. Active Travel. We support the ambition to make walking and cycling the natural choice for short journeys and we support the expansion of the e-bike schemes. This not only requires better active travel planning with safe, separated routes but better investment in associated infrastructure such as bike racks in towns and villages and supporting safe storage areas for electric bikes. Pedestrian safety and comfort can

be prioritised through better crossings, rights of way, improved surfaces, and lighting; and retrofit existing streets to rebalance public space in favour of pedestrians and cyclists. A good guide is “Gear Change – A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking” to inform binding local standards. In Dorset, there are also several old railway lines that have been part converted to walking/cycling trackways. These are a very important rural transport resource in Dorset, and it has been disappointing that the pace of their redevelopment into active travel pathways has been so slow.

6. Public Transport (Buses). Access to excellent public transport is fundamental to satisfying communities’ transport needs and preventing isolation for those without access to a car. Reversing the decline in provision of bus services is especially important in rural areas where the lack of public transport infrastructure and out-of-hours services leads to multi car ownership within families - often cheap cars with high emissions due to young drivers having to own cars to get to education and low paid part time jobs. The economic impact on families of this is also considerable.

National CPRE’s campaign “Every Village, Every Hour” is an important aspiration and could be used as a yardstick to test the success of public transport initiatives. The council’s bus partnership model linked to the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) needs to be fully implemented with a better working model between the council and the bus companies to prevent the recent debacle over the X51/X53 service. There also needs to be much better cross-border collaboration linking Dorset with Devon (Axminster), and Somerset (Yeovil) as well as BCP, Wiltshire (Salisbury) and Hampshire.

Dorset Council might consider revenue funding models for community transport schemes, co-funding and under-pinning community transport offerings with limited financial guarantees. This may be achieved through collaborative partnerships with town councils, community groups and/or Dorset County Hospital to enable public transport access for hospital appointments.

7. Public Transport (Trains). Dorset’s train links are an essential part of the transport infrastructure providing effective, low-carbon routes within and outside the county. The mainline link from Weymouth to London is the most important rail link but the Waterloo to Exeter service is also critical for those in the West and North of the county. The Heart of Wessex line provides a key (and underutilised) North-South link to Bath and Bristol. Better connectivity between bus and train services is vital to enable education, economic, social and leisure opportunities for Dorset residents. This needs to include through ticketing options on buses, trains and the community bus network.

Investment in trains is essential as an alternative to private cars for longer distance travelling. The Heart-of-Wessex line needs upgrades to allow an hourly service to enable much needed extra capacity. The Mainline Southwest Railway services through Sherborne to Salisbury in the North and from Weymouth to Southampton in the south also need significant investment including an upgrade to dual track

between Moreton and Dorchester and the introduction of a metro service along the south coast. Both of these are of high priority to support future growth in the county.

8. Safety. Dorset's casualty rates remain unacceptably high. As the DSRSP Strategy (2021–2030) makes clear, preventable deaths and serious injuries must be eradicated. It is suggested that Dorset Council formally adopt "Vision Zero" approach within the LTP with a target of zero fatalities and serious injuries by 2050. Other practical measures include extensive 20mph zones in towns and villages and investment in junction safety improvements throughout the county especially in areas of higher cycle usage.

9. Working Practices. There is the need for a more inclusive and integrated approach to transport across many departments looking at, for example: street design, accessibility and mobility, increasing people's social, economic, educational and community opportunities while improving public transport, reducing traffic and parking impacts, increasing health, well-being, access to greenspace and active travel modes. This requires not only more cross-departmental collaboration but also a wider range of stakeholder partnerships, with town and parish councils and local community groups as well as the current county-wide stakeholder groups. There's still too much top-down and not enough listening to and working closely with local communities on place-based solutions.