

Dacorum Environmental Forum

A Discussion

1. Purpose
 - Should the Forum's activities be extended?
 - Do we need closer ties with DBC?
 - How should the DEF best collaborate with the Dacorum Climate Action Network?
2. DEC Objectives and Terms of Reference
3. Our Plan for Dacorum 2024-2028, *Sustainable Future*, p 17
 - Our Plan for Dacorum 2024-2028, *Clean, Safe & Green*, p 19
 - Our Plan for Dacorum 2024-2028, *Proud and Thriving Borough*, p 23
4. Other Reference Documents
 - Dacorum Partnership - *Towards 2021* (published Jan 2008)
 - Enhanced Biodiversity Duty Report, Dacorum Borough
 - Herts Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)
 - DBC Electric Vehicle Strategy
 - DBC Climate Change and Action Plan
 - The Sustainable Travel Town Programme

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DEC Objectives and Terms of Reference (highlights)

Established on 25/11/1993 as a partnership between DBC and “the Community”, with **principal aims** of promoting (a) **dialogue on environmental issues** (b) **wider community involvement in and awareness of environmental protection** (c) **the development and implementation of a Local Agenda 21 Strategy (Community Plan) for the Borough (?)**

Its **objectives** are to **promote public interest in environmental issues and to stimulate local action.**

(a) provide an **opportunity for all interested groups, organisations and individuals** within the Borough **to meet and exchange information and to work in partnership to promote the protection and improvement of the local environment and contribute to the resolution of global problems.**

(b) **actively contribute to the development, implementation and monitoring of the Community Plan**

(c) **raise environmental concerns and issues** and, where appropriate, **seek consensus and promote solutions through dialogue with other agencies.**

Membership – free and open to all groups, organisations and individuals within the Borough that have an interest in promoting a sustainable environment.

Steering Group – 8 representatives from the DEF and responsible for work agenda/programme

Admin Support – provided, as far as practicable, through DBC’s Environmental Resources Unit.

Local Strategic Partnership representatives – DEP will nominate one representative each on LSP Board and LSP Support Group

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DBC Plan for Dacorum 2024 - 2028 Sustainable Future (p 17).

Where DBC is now...

Updating our Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy

Launching a £1 million Climate Emergency Fund

Agreeing a programme of work to reduce emissions

Setting up an energetic network of Dacorum residents, businesses, community and voluntary groups

Relaunching the Dacorum Climate Action Network (DCAN)

Working towards a comprehensive air quality strategy with neighbouring councils

Introducing 150 new Electric Vehicle Charge Points

Over the period, 2024 – 2028 DBC will...

Regularly publish the DBC's Carbon Footprint to drive and demonstrate progress to decarbonise DBC buildings, vehicles and operations by 2030

Increase the use of renewable energy sources eg PV panels

Improve energy efficiency of all social homes

Use the Local Plan to deliver environmental benefits locally

Develop a Nature Recovery Plan to protect and improve the natural environment

Support our residents, community organisations and business to achieve net zero by 2050 through advice and support

Improve local cycling and walking routes

Engage with and support residents to improve energy efficiency

Help young people in groups and schools to play their part.

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DBC Plan for Dacorum 2024 - 2028 Clean, Safe and Green (p 19).

Where DBC is now...

Planting trees – over 4,000 in 2023

Running waste services with the third highest recycling rate in Herts.

Creating and completing 51 ha of Nature Recovery Areas

Maintaining 68 Green Spaces across the Borough

Working with Herts to strengthen environmental education

Over the period, 2024 – 2028 DBC will...

Adopt a strategic approach and identify more areas for treeplanting

Encourage re-use rates and improve recycling rates

Identify further reduced grass cutting areas to encourage wildflowers

Deliver a Biodiversity Strategy and a Nature Recovery Plan

Work with the Environment Agency to improve the quality of the chalk stream that runs through Gadebridge Park

DBC Plan for Dacorum 2024 - 2028 A Proud and Thriving Borough (p 23).

Where DBC is now...

Developing Strategies to develop 11,000 new homes and 10,000

Over the period, 2024 – 2028 DBC will...

Improve sustainable travel options

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Actions identified this year: PART 1.

1. A 5-year Air Quality Plan being finalised
2. 68 trees planted last winter across the Borough
3. DBC appointed “supporting authority” for the Nature Recovery Plan with HCC as the “responsible authority”
4. “Friends of” volunteer working parties run monthly at Bunkers and Chipperfield Common
5. Tennis courts at Pound Meadow, Tring refurbished with £49,000 grant from Lawn Tennis Association
6. 800 Solar panels installed at Hemel Hempstead Leisure Centre with a grant of £630,000 from Sports England
7. Healthy Hub Project (with HCC) funded for a further 2 years from April 2025
8. Shopmobility Service – new 2-year service agreement signed with Community Action Dacorum
9. Infrastructure Delivery Plan to be developed to support further development to 2050
10. A ‘Landowners Forum’ formed to foster collaboration between landowners to ensure holistic planning and delivery of infrastructure
11. Work started with NHS bodies to progress Health Campus
12. £1.76m allocated to DBC from UK Shared Prosperity Funding (replaces EU funding) for 3 years
13. A further and final allocation (£106,052 capital and £470,376 revenue) from the same fund for year 2025/26 is due.
14. Microchipping of dogs and cats now compulsory and DBC has secured its first prosecution for failure to update a dog’s ownership details on the microchip data base.
15. DEFRA finds DBC’s Air Quality Action Plan Report “well-structured”
16. Three ponds restored, 5 new benches and 3 new picnic tables installed on Chipperfield Common.
17. River restoration continues in Gaderidge Park.
18. Consultation opens on Dacorum’s “Bring Sites”
18. The 2025 Dacorum Climate Action Network (DCAN) event was held on 10th March 2025, with 100 guests.
19. At the DCAN event 24 Green Community Grant applications totalling £125k.
20. DBC has received £50k grant to draw up a Heat Decarbonisation Strategy via Salix who administer the fund for DESENZ

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Actions identified this year: PART 2.

21. The Solar Together PV panel bulk-buy scheme to reduce panel prices opened and got a good response. In 2023 it helped homeowners to install 2.12 MWatt of production capacity.
22. The DBC Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) team applied for £300k to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme for works to Berkhamsted Civic Centre and was successful in being awarded £260k to fully decarbonize the building.
23. Funding from various sources has been obtained for 120 trees to be planted around the Borough.
24. The Air Quality Monitor in Northchurch has been withdrawn following 5 years of levels below UK health limits.
25. 104 EV fast (7.4kW) and rapid (<=50kW) charging points have been installed across 18 DBC public car parks in the Boro.
26. In the first month of use (May 2025) the PV panels on the roof of Hemel Hempstead Leisure Centre produced 27.25MWh of electricity. [roughly enough energy to allow 500 Evs to each drive 250 miles.]
27. DBC was awarded £2.3m by DESENZ under their Warm Homes Local Grant scheme for insulation improvements and air source heat pumps
28. CAN seminar organized
29. DBC has awarded £75,000 as Green Community Grants to 13 projects.
30. DBC has secured £3.8m through the Warm Homes Social Housing Fund (Wave 3) enabling improvements to be made to 376 residential homes.
31. There were 90 successful PV projects through Solar Together and all now complete
32. DBC has now partnered with HCC for further EV charging points to be installed within the Borough over next 3 years.
33. 80% DBC-owned properties have an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C or better.
34. Starting with a Hemel Hempstead Station<>town<>Maylands ride zone an electric bicycle scheme is to be introduced using £100k of CIL funding and further funding from Herts IQ, the body charged with promoting the expansion of the Maylands Industrial Area and the development of a biochemistry centre at Rothamstead.

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Referring back to DEC Objectives and Terms of Reference (Slide 2):

Promoting public interest in environmental protection is an objective of DEF – but how do we carry this out?

It is also an objective of DCAN – but this seems to be restricted to an event and seminar annually plus occasional mobilization of some of the “Friends of...” Groups. Any comments?

There is the required consultation on the Local Plan development, but I don’t believe this is really what is intended here.

Admin support from DBC seems to be on offer according to the O & ToR – is this being taken up? And to what extent do we have liaison and/or support from the officers at the Environmental Resources Unit?

8 representatives from the DEF comprise the Steering Group and are responsible for work agenda/programme. To what extent do they report back to DBC and if so to whom?

Something called the Local Strategic Partnership Board is referred to. (This is NOT the same as the Local Enterprise Board)

Do we actually nominate anyone to either the LSP Board or to the LSP Support Group? –

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Referring back to the excerpts from “Our Plan for Dacorum 2024 – 2028” (**Slides 3 and 4**) and to extracts from the Executive Members’ and Leader’s reports to the last 12 months of DBC Council Meetings (**Slides 5 and 6**):

The topics reported upon are only those which I judged are relevant to the scope of the DEF.

These four slides give us an opportunity to compare **work still current at the beginning of the year** with (a) **work planned for the succeeding four years** and with (b) work **progressing or completed as reported by the Council Leader and the Executive Members**.

All of the topics on Slide 3 except for the reference to “**improving walking routes**” and the objective to “**Help young people in groups and schools to play their part** [in taking action on the Climate and Ecological Emergency]” were reported on to the Council, usually multiples of times.

Similarly, all of the topics on Slide 4 except for the reference to “**Working with Hertfordshire to strengthen environmental education**” and the objective to “**Encourage re-use rates and to improve recycling rates** [for household waste]” were also reported on to the Council, again usually multiples of times.

It is of course always a possibility that either (a) I failed to pick up some items from the relevant Council Minutes or (b) an officer may have overlooked some of the apparently unreported items.

However, I believe that both the current and the preceding council administrations should be congratulated on the way the council’s plans are being drawn up, implemented, completed and reported on appropriately to the Council during the year – as demonstrated by this informal study.

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Nevertheless, this informal study does confirm my original assertion that, in a departure from earlier practice, Dacorum Borough Council is, for whatever reason, no longer formally addressing the issue of the decarbonization of transport.

Transport is a major contributor of greenhouse gas emissions and while Hertfordshire County Council is formally the local Transport Authority, there may well be a supporting role for Dacorum Borough Council to play in encouraging individuals, businesses and communities to take practical steps to control this source of carbon dioxide.

Does the Dacorum Environmental Forum wish to seek the agreement of the Borough Council to extending its activities to include the issues of encouraging the improvement and development of bus and rail public transport?

DISCUSS

Thank you for your attention.