



# Minutes

<b>Name of Meeting</b>		Environment and Sustainability Forum
<b>Date and Time</b>		15 <sup>th</sup> February 2021, 17:00
<b>Venue</b>		Microsoft Teams
<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role/Organisation</b>
	Natasha Dix	IWC, Strategic Manager Waste and Environment
	Colin Rowland	IWC, Director of Neighbourhoods
	Holly Jones	IWC, Climate Change Project Officer
	Alexander Lewis-Jones	Senior Analyst & Service Manager – Electric Vehicles, Delta-EE
	Paul Walker	Head of Strategic Development, Southern Vectis
	Debbie Andre	Councillor
	Chris Ashman	IWC, Director - Regeneration
	Colin Palmer	Chair of Wight Community Energy
	David Thornton	Smart Island
	Dina Jung	
	Charles Chapman	IWC, Chairman, Licensing Committee
	DLM	
	Jennine Gardiner	IWC, Rights of Way Assistant
	Steve Hastings	Councillor, Central Wight
	Helena Hewston	Shalfleet Parish Council
	John Hobart	Councillor, Carisbrooke
	Janet Owen	The Earth Museum
	Jonathan Bacon	Chairman, AONB
	Lester Slade	
	Ian Boyd	
	Lee Matthews	IWC, Recreation & Open Spaces Manager
	Clare Mosdell	IWC, Executive Member for ASC & Public Health
	Paul Fuller	Councillor, Cowes West and Gurnard
	Chris Quirk	IWC, Chair of Planning Committee
	Roger Bartrum	
	Sarah Talbot	Fishbourne Parish Council
	Michael Murwill	Councillor, Brading, St Helens and Bembridge
	Vince Wedlock-Ward	Future IOW
	Rodney Downer	Councillor,
Stuart George		
Tom Murphy	Freshwater Parish Council	
Dave Wallis	Island Roads	
Ian Ward	Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport	
17:00	ND	Welcome and apologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillor Simon Walker, East Cowes</li> </ul>
	HJ	MS Teams and housekeeping
17:05	HJ	Topics for 2021 forums – most popular topic requests were: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Isle of Wight Council Climate and Environment Strategy to 2030</li> <li>2. Isle of Wight circular economy</li> </ol>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Covid recovery and climate change – ‘build back better’</li> <li>4. Reforestation, forestry strategy and grants, carbon offsetting via forests</li> <li>5. Sustainable transport (active travel)</li> <li>6. Sustainable tourism</li> <li>7. Green local business</li> <li>8. Government grants for home heat decarbonisation / renewable energy</li> <li>9. Road verge rewilding</li> <li>10. Hedgerows</li> </ol> <p>The plan is to work through these in order from March onwards. Other topics can still be suggested, or incorporated into other relevant topics – please send suggestions or requests to <a href="mailto:sustainability@iow.gov.uk">sustainability@iow.gov.uk</a></p>
17:10	HJ	<p>Isle of Wight grid infrastructure introduction</p> <p>Currently there is a need for a fourth interconnector with the mainland to both support increasing demand for energy but also to be able to export excess energy back to the mainland, should we begin to install new large-scale renewable generation across the Island.</p> <p>An interconnector would be the easiest solution, but it is prohibitively expensive at £30 million+, and costs would be passed onto developers if renewable energy projects were to start before the interconnector was available – currently not expected until the early 2030s.</p> <p>There may be some work-arounds, such as battery storage and microgrids, but these will require investigation.</p> <p>In terms of EVs, this issue could have an impact on the additional electricity required for charging, especially when the law around the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles changes in 2030.</p>
17:20		<p><b>Alexander Lewis-Jones, Senior Analyst &amp; Service Manager – Electric Vehicles, Delta-EE</b></p> <p>Public transport EVs and grid connections – slides attached separately</p>
	IW	Can we consider hydrogen vehicles?
	ALJ	Expense may be prohibitive. Hydrogen may end up becoming a sector-specific solution.
	DJ	Southern Vectis have stated that EV buses are not powerful enough for the Island’s hills – why?
	ALJ	EV buses are now 2x as powerful as they were originally, but most areas where they have been widely rolled out (e.g. London) are almost completely flat
	LS	Hydrogen is not powerful enough for hills – it is less efficient in vehicles than electricity so hydrogen buses may also struggle
17:45		<p><b>Paul Walker, Head of Strategic Development, Southern Vectis</b></p> <p>The Route to Decarbonising Public Transport – slides attached separately</p>
	LS	Particulate emissions from new diesel buses are much lower but what about CO2 as this is what has the climate impacts?
	PW	Unsure of the exact figures for carbon dioxide – will check and confirm
	CM	What is the impact of EV batteries?
	LS	There are concerns about battery charging and expected lifespan of batteries, but these seem to be working better and lasting longer than previously anticipate. Are they repairable if necessary?
	PW	We are still learning about batteries but please bear in mind Southern Vectis is the end user, not the manufacturer. We are still learning about EV batteries and at the moment the priority is to ensure that we are buying what will definitely work.
	CR	Is there a comparison of the costs of different types of vehicles?
	PW	Please refer to slides – there is a chart outlining the current costs.
	DJ	Why is the Isle of Wight not seeing a transition to sustainable buses as soon as other areas?

	PW	<p>One reason is the clean air on the IOW. Areas with more pollution are being prioritised for transition to EVs. Southern Vectis is committed to making low carbon technology work on the IOW but there are four factors slowing us down:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affordability</li> <li>2. Availability of a site or depot for EV charging etc.</li> <li>3. The current Island infrastructure</li> <li>4. The island's terrain is unlikely to be suitable for EVs as they are right now</li> </ol>
	SH	<p>Has been working as the chairman of Fitbus and has been trying to work towards EV minibuses for 2+ years. Can confirm that all the above reasons are why this is so difficult.</p>
	LS	<p>What is the vehicle utilisation percentage in the UK? China has introduced huge numbers of EV buses already in large cities.</p>
	PW	<p>Currently we don't know how reliable EVs will be in UK terms. China is far ahead of the UK in terms of EV uptake, including for public transport, but we don't yet know if this will completely translate into how things work in the UK.</p>
<b>18:20</b>		<b>Pre-submitted questions</b>
		<p>Is the council monitoring pollution levels on the Island so that action can be taken, especially as we have a high number of pensioners with breathing difficulties?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Isle of Wight Council has a duty under the Environment Act 1995 to review and assess the air quality across the island. The air quality on the Isle of Wight is generally good. The Isle of Wight Council monitors air quality in key locations across the island and at this time has not determined any location as being an Air Quality Management Area.</li> <li>• The 2019 Air Quality Report can be downloaded from the council website (<a href="https://www.iow.gov.uk">Executive summary (iow.gov.uk)</a>). Wootton High Street and Church Road Junction are new to the monitoring report as of October 2019 so more information on these specific areas will be available in the 2020 report but so far pollution levels here are not of concern as their average level is below the national average.</li> </ul>
		<p>Flail cutting still seems to be widespread on the Island. Is it council policy to continue to carry out flail cutting? What justification is there to carry on with this practice?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flailing should not be carried out on council-owned land without permission. On non-council owned land, we can't control what landowners do in terms of land management. However, there are some best practice rules that should be abided by where hedgerows house more than a certain number of species. I've passed this onto the relevant team to investigate. If you have any further detail around locations you've noticed this happening it would be helpful to have this.</li> </ul>
		<p>Single use plastic is still being produced, purchased and discarded in unsustainable quantities. Will our council lobby Central Government to legislate against its use where it can easily be replaced by other more environmental substitutes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council does not lobby the government on issues in this manner. However, central government is taking a range of steps to tackle plastic pollution, including:</li> <li>• Plastic microbeads were banned in January 2018. In October 2020 the ban on plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds came into law. The 5p plastic bag charge is being doubled to 10p in April 2021 – the 5p charge cut plastic bag use by 95% already. The deposit return scheme for drinks bottles is expected to be introduced in 2023 following recent public consultation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A UK tax on plastic packaging is also being introduced – any plastic not made up of at least 30% recycled content from April 2022 will be taxed at £200 per ton</li> </ul>
	<p>As part of our drive to encourage more people to travel short journeys by bicycle or on foot, can we introduce more 20mph speed limits on main roads that link our footpaths and cycle paths?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council's speed limit policy group has recommended introducing more 20mph zones across the island and recommended making funding available in the upcoming budget to review the speed limit; however, this only happened in mid-January so no further action has taken place yet.</li> </ul>
	<p>In 2008 The Island Strategic Partnership stated that we were to become an 'Eco Island' through implementation of a sustainable community strategy and by 2020 have the smallest carbon footprint in England. In 2019 we were designated as a 'Biosphere'. Do we have the smallest carbon footprint in England? What positive benefits to the environment have resulted from our Biosphere status?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to the government's 2018 local authority emissions figures (most recent available full set), the Isle of Wight is 54<sup>th</sup> (out of 425) UK-wide in terms of per capita (per person) footprint at 3.4 tCO<sub>2</sub> (lowest is 0.7 tCO<sub>2</sub> per person) and 82<sup>nd</sup> in terms of total carbon footprint at 484.9 ktCO<sub>2</sub> (lowest is 9.4 ktCO<sub>2</sub>).</li> <li>• The Biosphere status looks at how the relationship between humans and nature is managed. The status was applied for by the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team and the Biosphere award is recognition of what we have achieved so far and in because of our intentions to do better and to be more sustainable in the future.</li> <li>• Jonathan Bacon (AONB) confirmed that action regarding the Biosphere status has been delayed owing to Covid. However, things are now getting back up and running again. There is a partnership with three other Biospheres with the aim of raising the profile of the Biosphere status.</li> <li>• We will be able to have a future Forum dedicated to the Biosphere.</li> </ul>
	<p>I would like to ask about the Oil Exploration in Arreton. How is oil exploration on the Island justified when we have 'Biosphere' status, and claim to be an 'Eco Island'?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently, the planning application is still under consultation and no final decision has been made. The council has made the decision not to outright ban any oil or mineral exploration or extraction planning applications as this would take us out of the decision making process altogether and send planning applications directly to the Planning Inspectorate off the Island instead, thus removing the Isle of Wight from any decision-making process involved in oil drilling. Not banning oil drilling in planning policy is the only way applications can continue to be heard locally.</li> <li>• This stage of the application is only for exploration and would not allow extraction. An application for extraction would have to be considered completely separately from the exploration application and could only be considered if the exploration application was approved and went ahead successfully.</li> <li>• The Biosphere status is not related to specific planning actions, but instead to how the relationship between humans and nature is balanced and managed in specific areas. As such, the UKOG application sits separately from the Biosphere status and UNESCO would not comment on it, nor would it affect the Island's Biosphere status if it were to be approved.</li> <li>• Additionally, the proposed area for the UKOG exploration to take place is not an area of special natural interest.</li> </ul>
<b>18:30</b>	<b>AOB</b>

	LS	Can we hear more about food security? This has not yet been mentioned at Forums.
	HJ	Will compile any currently available information and sent it out ASAP. We can also discuss this in more detail at a future Forum. There are some points around this in the Resilience section of the Climate and Environment Strategy.
<b>Date of next Environment &amp; Sustainability Forum: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 17:00</b>		
<b>Topic: Climate and Environment Strategy</b>		