



Dorset Deserves Better

Campaign for Re-think of Dorset Local Plan

Newsletter 1 : 25 January 2022

Campaign launch

Monday 17 January saw the launch of the Dorset Deserves Better campaign, by our delivery - at an almost empty County Hall - of our Open Letter to Cllr Spencer Flower, the Leader of the Council. The same day we sent copies to all members of Dorset Council, the Council's Chief Executive, senior members of the planning staff, and the Campaign partners.

To view the Open Letter or the News Release, go to our website at:

<https://www.dorsetcan.org/ddbpr>

Reply from the Leader of the Council

From: Cllr. Spencer Flower <cllrspencer.flower@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Date: Mon, 17 Jan 2022 at 14:46
Subject: RE: Dorset Deserves Better Campaign
To: Giles Watts <dorsetdeservesbetter@gmail.com> Michael Dower <mdower6@btinternet.com>
Cc: Cllr. David Walsh <cllrdavid.walsh@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>, Cllr. Ray Bryan <cllrray.bryan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>, Chief Executive <chiefexecutive@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>, Mike Garrity <mike.garrity@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>, Terry Sneller <terry.sneller@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>, Hilary Jordan <hilary.jordan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>, Dorset Council Councillors <DorsetCouncilCouncillors@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>

Good afternoon

I write to acknowledge your email and to thank you for writing to me on this important topic.

The Council is well aware of the concerns of many local residents, much of which you have set out in your email.

I am in discussions with colleagues and with central government on this matter and have been so for some time.

I will respond more fully to your email in due course and certainly when we have something to share with you, which I expect to be within the next few weeks.

Thank you once again for getting in touch with me on a matter which is so vital in the shaping of Dorset over the life time of the Dorset Local Plan and beyond.

Kind regards

Cllr Spencer Flower

Leader of Council

Our reaction

Cllr Flower's response is swift and courteous, but offers no prospect of an early meeting between senior councillors and representatives of our Alliance.

The silence from County Hall is disturbing, and does nothing to allay our concerns about the Plan. We must maintain and strengthen our pressure on Dorset Councillors and staff to ensure that our ideas are taken into account as they prepare the next draft of the Local Plan.

We are glad that Cllr Flower acknowledges “the concerns of many local residents”. Accepting our concerns makes it less likely that they will be ignored.

It is good to note that Cllr Flower and his colleagues are “in discussions with government on this matter”. The results of the Amersham by-election, plus pressure from Home County MPs to reduce the flow of major housing estates and of northern MPs in the red wall constituencies for true ‘levelling up’ in the north, have shaken the Government into a review of housing and planning policies, led by Michael Gove. The ground is shifting under the feet of Dorset Council, and the next version of the Dorset Plan should reflect that shift.

Also encouraging is the newly announced public consultation on the draft BCP Local Plan, which suggests that BCP Council is ready to challenge the Government’s standard method for assessing housing need; is aware of the need to protect the Green Belt; and may not need to ask Dorset Council to accept a spill-over of unmet need from BCP.

So, we have responded to Cllr Flower, on behalf of the Alliance, to say that we look forward to hearing further from him soon. We have re-affirmed our readiness to work with Dorset Council in finding solutions that meet the needs of the county.

Meanwhile we all need to sustain the emphasis of this campaign. We will not be stopped by the silence of the Council. We will raise our numbers. We will raise our voice. We will be heard !

Press and media coverage

On Friday 14 January, we sent copies of the Open Letter with a covering message to a wide range of press, radio, TV and social media. This produced a good harvest of newspaper articles and interviews.

- Swanage and Wareham Advertiser carried a front-page feature, “Time to rethink the Local Plan” <https://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&pubid=e7dc8a99-1bcb-4622-8875-600a6a6bb270>
- Giles Watts of Dorset CAN and Peter Bowyer of Dorset CPRE were interviewed on Ask Alfred - Shaftesbury Local Radio <https://thisisalfred.com/podcast/the-alfred-daily-17th-january-2022/>
- Michael Dower was interviewed on Keep106FM – Dorchester Local Radio <https://keep106.com/2022/01/18/interview-with-michael-dower-from-dorset-climate-action-network/>
- Dorset Echo article: <https://www.dorsetecho.co.uk/news/19851871.dorset-deserves-better-damaging-local-plan/>
- Dorset View carried a front-page article with extracts from our press release: <https://www.dorsetview.co.uk/campaign-to-change-local-plan-because-dorset-deserves-better/#.YebR6i-I2WF>
- Purbeck Gazette carried a feature on the Housing Needs Figures <https://www.purbeckgazette.co.uk/docs/pdfs/265.pdf>
- Bridport News carried an article based on our News Release.

Parish and Town Councils

The signatories to the Open Letter already include five parish councils – Arne; Cheselbourne; Corscombe, Halstock & District; Lytchett Matravers; and Stinsford.

We aim to enlist many more local councils into the Campaign Alliance. On 17 January, Giles Watts wrote to all of Dorset's 170 Parish and Town Councils, inviting them to join the Alliance. Many Councils have quickly responded to say that they will bring this invitation to early meetings. We look forward to early news of their accession to the campaign.

If you have contact with your town and parish council, please urge them to join the Campaign

On 17 January, Giles Watts and Michael Dower made a presentation on the Campaign to a group of about 15 local councillors, as part of a monthly series of meetings of councillors organised by Caz Dennett and Julie Booker. This meeting generated a lively debate. Here is a link to our presentation:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1eNUXxaVGXQRKI_fg1SwFTc73cwcZms3T/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=115632987799839119128&rtpof=true&sd=true

The Alliance grows !

Four new organisations have joined the Dorset Deserves Better Campaign. We extend a warm welcome to :

- **The Purbeck Society**, bringing with them a further 110 members
- **Dorchester Transport Action Group**, with 10 members
- **Langton Matravers Parish Council**, number to be confirmed
- **Transition Town Weymouth and Portland**, with 20 members.

So, a Campaign Alliance now includes 42 organisations representing over 21,000 residents of Dorset. We expect to announce more members as the weeks go by, and are setting ourselves a target of at least 50 member organisations, representing at least 25,000 Dorset citizens.

Join the Campaign

If your organisation wants to join the campaign, please fill in and submit a form here : <http://www.dorsetcan.org/link>. Organisations and individuals can join the campaign at : <https://bit.ly/DorsetDB>

Campaign Communication

The main page for Dorset Deserves Better is: <http://www.dorsetcan.org/ddb>

For general enquiries and communications, email: dorsetdeservesbetter@gmail.com

For media enquiries, email: mediadb@gmail.com

To view the news release and the Open Letter to Dorset Council, go to:

<https://www.dorsetcan.org/ddbpr>

Social Media – a fine response in the first Campaign week

Over the last week, our Social Media channels have been quite vibrant with activity on the Dorset Deserves Better campaign. In total we published around 30 posts, on each of our platforms Twitter, Facebook & Instagram; plus 5 stories on our new channel, Snapchat.

Twitter. An average engagement rate of 2 to 3% is considered 'good' On Twitter, we had our best post of The Dorset View article of our campaign with 76 impressions (audience) with 16 engagements and an engagement 'rate' of 21.1% on 21st

January. Secondary engagement rates were 14.9% (inviting you to join us in the climate and ecological emergency strategy improvements and to build our membership); radio coverage on Keep FM of Michael Dower and the DDB campaign (12.5%) and finally, the Dorset Echo article on the DDB campaign (11.4%).

Facebook. On our Facebook page, views were up 14%, our post reach improved by 87% and our post engagements were up by 363%. Our most successful posts were the launch of the campaign and details of our other social media channels.

Instagram. Our channel continues to grow, with 1,722 followers. Each post attracts on average three new followers. Our 'Join our campaign and submit form for DDB' was the most successful post with 11 likes and 59 impressions. Our 'Contact us' information with DDB contact details followed closely, with 10 likes and 58 impressions. Our DDB link to the Open Letter and our DDB web earned us 7 likes and 55 impressions. We have also posted Stories daily.

Snapchat. Snap is getting us quite a few personal messages of support, with likes and quite a few comments to our box. We have posted one a day from Monday – Friday on the Snapmap, with our story. We hope to bring our Snap account more in line with the others : so, do add and message us @dorset_can

Your contact with our channels

To keep up to date with the Campaign :

- Visit our website at: <http://www.dorsetcan.org/ddb>
- Follow all of our social media posts at:
 - Twitter: @Dorset_CAN;
 - Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/147832150657785>
 - Instagram: @dorset_can;
 - Snapchat: @dorset_can;
 - Dorset CAN (Climate Action Network) Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/DorsetCAN>

If you are the social media contact for any of our Alliance Organisations, please contact Tracee Cossey directly so that we can share social media content : traceecossey@hotmail.com

We welcome your News

Please send us news of your campaigning.

Join the Campaign Team

We will welcome help at the centre of this campaign, particularly in :

- Gathering news from partners and preparing the weekly newsletter
- Research, in order to strengthen our arguments as we build the campaign.

Please write to us at dorsetdeservesbetter@gmail.com