

Somerset Council – Decisions taken by the Scrutiny Committee - Climate and Place on Friday, 26 April 2024

Agenda Item No	Topic	Decision
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Part A – Items considered in public

A1	Apologies for Absence	Apologies were received from Councillor Suria Aujla, Councillor Adam Boyden substituted by Cllr Mike Rigby, Cllr Edric Hobbs substituted by Cllr Mike Murphy, Prof Paul Withers from Lancaster University and Prof Penny Johnes from Bristol University.
A2	Election of a vice-chair for the meeting	Councillor Henry Hobhouse was elected as vice-chair for the meeting.
A3	Declarations of Interest	There were no declarations of interest received.
A4	Public Question Time	The committee noted the statement from David Orr.
A5	Overview of the nutrient pollution problem on the Somerset Levels and Moors designated sites	The committee received a presentation from Mark Taylor, Natural England.
A7	How is the water level controlled on the Somerset Levels and Moors?	The committee received a presentation from Phil Brewin, Somerset Internal Drainage Boards.
A8	Wessex Water improvements driving phosphate reduction on the Somerset Levels and Moors	The committee received a presentation from Matt Wheeldon, Wessex Water.
A9	The contribution of agricultural pollution to the nutrient problem on the Somerset Levels and Moors - in terms of scale and the known unknowns.	The committee received information from Giles Bryan, The Environment Agency.

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A10	Summing up and next steps	<p>The committee voted unanimously in favour of recommendations to the Executive as follows -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Immediately remove the 20% buffer included in the Somerset phosphate calculator. 2. Conduct a speedy review of the huge inconsistency between what Dr Clegg said, echoed by Wessex Water and what the calculator says with how much of the river borne phosphorus enters the Somerset Levels and Moors, as that calculator is what informs developers as to how much phosphate we are requiring them to offset. 3. Conduct an urgent review of the entire nutrient neutrality policy in light of the legal advice we have received, which makes it clear that headroom exists and that it could be used in the mitigation of new housing development. 4. The Climate and Place to set up a Task and Finish Group which will report back to the Committee on a tight timescale to set out the options available to the Council once it is in possession of the correct data. 5. The Council looks to work on a Land Use Strategy as part of a Local Plan.