

Panel Notes from PEB screening at St George's Fordington.

On Thursday 23rd July more than one hundred people gathered at St George's Church, Fordington for a screening of the 'People's Emergency Briefing', a film about the climate crisis. The event was organised on behalf of Dorchester Churches Together Ecology Group and was opened by the Rev Cora Yarien who welcomed everyone with a reading from Psalm 104.

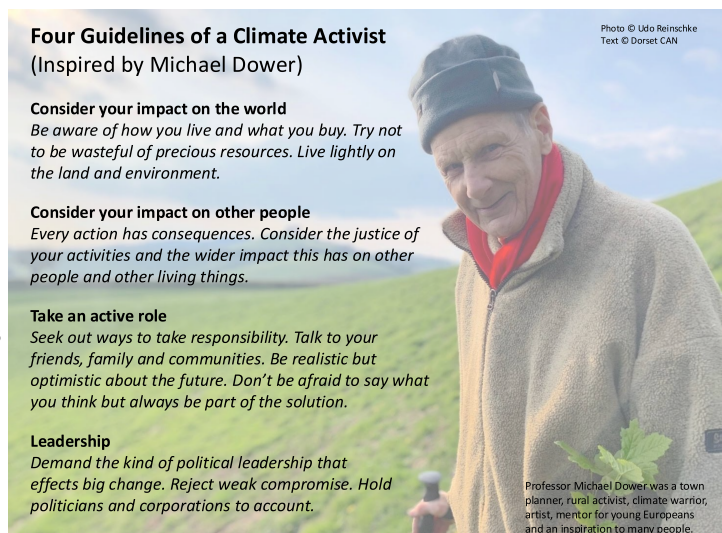
Following the film, which by its very nature is alarming, an invited panel of seven spoke about positive ways we might respond, individually and collectively, to the climate crisis.

Julie-Ann Booker explained how she had written to her pension fund, urging them to disinvest from fossil fuel funds. She encouraged others to do likewise and add their voices to this growing demand. It is important not to feel helpless and overwhelmed in the face of climate change but to concentrate on doing one or two small things. Having become a grandparent, Julie-Ann has joined an online group called 'Our Grandchildren's Climate'. She also gains solace from growing food in her allotment.

Nigel Hewish, representing the United Church on the Churches Together Ecology Group, spoke of fitting solar panels and new windows to their church as a way of involving the congregation in thinking about climate change. He is an active member of Trees for Dorset which engages in tree planting at sites across the county, there are also vegetable growing projects at St Osmund's Middle School. With his grandchildren Nigel has planted pumpkins, beans and sweetcorn together as a way of managing the soil.

Giles Watts of Dorset Climate Action Network (CAN) outlined how that organisation helps local communities lower their carbon footprint. He described how they were supporting people in Loders village to develop a community solar energy source and in north Dorchester were exploring the possibility of a small wind farm. Other endeavours include the Great Big Dorset Hedge project to survey and restore hedgerows which are under threat.

On 14 November 2026 Dorset CAN will host a 'Dorset COP' at Kingston Maurward, bringing together individuals and groups to share ideas and progress on local climate initiatives. This event is open to everyone. Giles included '4 Guidelines Card', by Michael Dower a long time climate activist who died recently.



Four Guidelines of a Climate Activist
(Inspired by Michael Dower)

Consider your impact on the world
Be aware of how you live and what you buy. Try not to be wasteful of precious resources. Live lightly on the land and environment.

Consider your impact on other people
Every action has consequences. Consider the justice of your activities and the wider impact this has on other people and other living things.

Take an active role
Seek out ways to take responsibility. Talk to your friends, family and communities. Be realistic but optimistic about the future. Don't be afraid to say what you think but always be part of the solution.

Leadership
Demand the kind of political leadership that effects big change. Reject weak compromise. Hold politicians and corporations to account.

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Text © Dorset CAN

Professor Michael Dower was a town planner, rural activist, climate warrior, artist, mentor for young Europeans and an inspiration to many people.

Marigold Bentley told of her experience as a representative of the Quakers at the United Nations and how locally in Dorchester they have worked on making the Meeting House a living representation of environmental awareness by installing solar panels and creating an insect friendly garden in 2013, please visit. She recalled an important speech by Margaret Thatcher on climate change but stressed that we should not see the climate emergency through a party-political focus which divides and distracts us. Instead, we should approach the issue from a faith perspective and consider our personal relationship with the planet. This is an insight many astronauts gain when they look at the earth from outer space. Marigold recommended the book 'Orbital' by Samantha Harvey which describes a similar experience.

Tony McDougal, from Dorford Church, spoke of his time representing the UK Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) at the Montreal COP in 2005. He urged us to lobby our government to take action on climate change by e-mailing the new Prime Minister (Andy Burnham) and the minister at the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (Miatta Fahnbulleh). He then listed a number of small steps we can take including installing a water butt, LED light bulbs, bird boxes, bat boxes, and supporting a food bank.

Kate Reid, Dorchester Town Councillor for East Ward, spoke of her role in helping to develop a sense of community which provides a foundation for community action. She referred to the support and encouragement the council gives to many existing community groups and initiatives and the wide variety of community events that take place across the town to provide support and engagement for residents of all ages. The DTC website is a great source of information and the team can always be contacted at the North Square offices behind the Corn Exchange, the regular councillors' surgery in the main library (10:00 -12:00 on the first Saturday of each month) and at organised events held in the Corn Exchange or one of the many town parks. The council adopted a Climate Action Plan in 2021 which will be reviewed this year, environmental impact is taken into account in decision making, recent work includes fitting solar panels to council buildings, and moving to electric vehicles.

<https://dorset.homewise.energy/App/Welcome> (Dorset Council link for assessing your own home.)

[https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/residential-on-street-electric-vehicle-charging?](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/residential-on-street-electric-vehicle-charging?p_l_back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fq%3DEV%2Bstreet%2Bcharging%2Bdorchester)

[p_l_back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fq%3DEV%2Bstreet%2Bcharging%2Bdorchester](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/residential-on-street-electric-vehicle-charging?p_l_back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fq%3DEV%2Bstreet%2Bcharging%2Bdorchester) (Dorset Council link for EV residential street charging)

The **Rev Jimmy Holden** of St Mary's talked about the importance of encouraging action by engaging people at a deeper, spiritual level. Rather than bombarding people with depressing facts, he advocated an approach that changes hearts as well as minds. Jimmy described himself as an amateur in land management and animal care.

The **Rev John Yarien** concluded this section by encouraging people to lobby our local and national politicians but also to talk to our neighbours about climate change. We will feel less helpless and alone when we do.

In the Question and Answer session that followed, these points were raised:

- **Jo Lacey-Smith**, chair of 'Green Martinstown', warned against a reaction of denial among many who had seen the film in her village. After initially feeling alarmed by the film, it was tempting to respond by playing down the urgency and comforting oneself with the thought that individually we are powerless to do anything. The way to resist denial was to work together. We should join projects or groups that enable us to do so.
- The difficulty of influencing oil companies and other big players in the fossil fuel industry was raised.
- The lack of charging points for EV cars in Dorchester is an inhibiting factor in areas like Fordington with limited off-road parking. A suggestion of a charging point in St George's car park was made. It would benefit the local community as well as providing an income stream to the church. Rev Cora Yarrien replied that this idea was being investigated, along with solar panels for the church (hall?), but that progress would be inevitably be slow.
- The difficulty of reaching and engaging more parishioners and a wider cross-section of Dorchester society was highlighted. Various panel members responded. One way was to encourage other local groups and clubs to hold their own screening of the film. **Julie-Ann Booker** offered to help and advise anyone thinking of doing this. There was a discussion of finding a suitable public space that could hold and attract a wider audience. Such as Brewery Square. The **Rev Jimmy Holden** reminded us of the importance of simply talking to neighbours and friends even if they were reluctant to engage with the topic of climate emergency. Sometimes, he said, it is important to have difficult conversations, even if it makes people uncomfortable.

Links:

Our Grandchildren's Climate: <https://ourgrandchildrensclimate.org/>

Prime Minister's Office: <https://contact.no10.gov.uk/>

Department of Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ):

Miatta Fahnbulleh MP, DESNZ, Level 3, 55 Whitehall, London SW1A 2HP