

# **Somerset West and Taunton Shadow Council**

## **Motion to declare a climate emergency**

**Proposed by Councillor Dave Mansell**

**Seconded by Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts**

**This motion is supported by Councillors Simon Coles, Stuart Dowding, Eddie Gaines, Jefferson Horsley, Peter Pilkington, Nicholas Thwaites and Gwilym Wren**

### **Shadow Full Council notes:**

1. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C (2), published in October 2018, provided a stark warning to the world. Increasing carbon emissions from human activities have already caused about 1°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels. If current trends continue the United Nations target (agreed in Paris in 2015) to endeavour to limit the average increase to 1.5°C may be reached by 2030. Current national commitments throughout the world are expected to still result in global warming of 3°C by 2100, with further warming continuing afterwards.
2. Increases in carbon levels and temperatures are already having serious environmental, economic and social impacts, including increases in extreme weather, sea levels, flooding, drought, heat waves, forest fires, ill-health and the spread of diseases, greater loss of species and habitats, changing ecosystems, ocean acidification, higher ocean temperatures and lower oxygen levels, and reduced yields from agriculture and fisheries. The IPCC report shows these impacts will be worse with global warming of 2°C compared to 1.5°C (3).
3. With increasing temperatures, the impacts will escalate, with some passing tipping points and becoming irreversible. Natural feedback systems, such as loss of albedo (surface reflectivity) due to melting sea-ice, will result in further global warming and greater climate changes. An international team of climate scientists have warned of a Hothouse Earth scenario with naturally stored carbon being released from permafrost, forests and seas, which leads to sea levels rising by 10-60 metres and parts of the Earth becoming uninhabitable (4).
4. Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of England, is among many who have warned that the global financial system could be at risk from both physical climate impacts and a 'carbon bubble' where efforts to decarbonise leave carbon intensive assets stranded (5). This applies to most fossil fuels reserves, which need to be left in the ground and not burned, as well as fossil fuel power plants.
5. Options and choices exist to reduce carbon emissions from human activities, including our energy generation and use, transport, business and industry, waste generation, food consumption and land use; but these options are not being adopted and introduced quickly enough.
6. To avoid the worst impacts of global warming and climate change, carbon emissions need to be reduced as rapidly and quickly as possible.

7. Individuals cannot be expected to make the reductions necessary on their own. Society needs to change its infrastructure, incentives, regulations and taxation to make low carbon living easier and a common social norm.
8. Climate action can deliver wider economic and social benefits in terms of improved health and well-being, new jobs, savings and market opportunities.
9. There is a need to build on strategies and plans previously adopted by Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council (6) and to take these further.

**Shadow Full Council resolves:**

1. To declare a climate emergency.
2. With partners across the district and region, to start working towards making Somerset West and Taunton carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account emissions from both production and consumption (7).
3. To call on the UK Government to provide guidance and the powers and resources to make carbon neutrality possible by writing to local MPs, the Secretaries of State for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy, Transport, Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and Housing, Communities & Local Government.
4. To develop a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan, starting from July 2019, with a cross party working group and the necessary officer support to assist with investigative work, drafting the plan and the delivery of early projects.
5. To report to Full Council before the end of 2019 with costed proposals for projects for the Council to effectively start addressing the climate emergency, which could include:
  - a) Enabling more cycling, walking and use of shared and public transport.
  - b) Providing electric car charging points in car parks and other suitable locations, including for use by council tenants and council vehicles.
  - c) Adopting high energy efficiency standards and providing for the effective use of recycling services in new buildings through the planning system.
  - d) Demonstrating and developing a programme for retrofitting high standards of energy saving and insulation in existing council buildings, including housing, and assets; initially focusing on where the greatest benefits could be gained.
  - e) Promoting waste reduction, reuse and recycling on the go, and supporting community projects.
  - f) Sourcing electricity used by the council from renewable energy suppliers and providing support for smart energy infrastructure, including demand management and storage.
  - g) Supporting green businesses and social enterprises.

- h) Review of planning policies and investment opportunities for local renewable energy and infrastructure and environmental markets, as well as divestment from fossil fuels.
  - i) Adaptation for flooding, coastal erosion and other impacts of climate change.
  - j) The appointment of a specialist officer to develop and champion the delivery of the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan.
6. To provide an annual review and update of the plan thereafter.
7. A provisional budget of £25,000 to be allocated to allow this work, including early projects agreed by the working group, to be undertaken either through resources already available or through commissioning. This sum to include £15,000 as a supplementary budget allocation from the General Fund in 2019/20, to be taken from general reserves and returned if able to be undertaken from already available resources, and £10,000 to be prioritised from the proposed HRA Maintenance Budget in 2019/20.

#### **References and additional information:**

- 1) Climate emergency motions are being adopted by a growing number of local authorities and have been agreed already by Bradford District Council, Brighton and Hove City Council, Bristol City Council, Cornwall Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Kirklees Council, Lewes Council, Liverpool City Council, The London Assembly, Nottingham City Council, Scarborough Borough Council, Shropshire Council, Stroud District Council and Trafford Council.
- 2) IPCC Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 °C - Summary for Policymakers ([www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/summary-for-policy-makers](http://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/summary-for-policy-makers)). For an example of informed media comment see: [www.newscientist.com/article/mg24031992-900-weve-missed-many-chances-to-curb-global-warming-this-may-be-our-last/](http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg24031992-900-weve-missed-many-chances-to-curb-global-warming-this-may-be-our-last/)
- 3) See WWF - Our Warming World: how much difference will half-a-degree really make? - [www.wwf.org.uk/updates/our-warming-world-how-much-difference-will-half-degree-really-make](http://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/our-warming-world-how-much-difference-will-half-degree-really-make)
- 4) See BBC Climate Change report: 'Hothouse Earth' risks even if CO2 emissions slashed - [www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-45084144](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-45084144)
- 5) Warnings on stranded assets and the need for fossil fuel divestment:
  - [www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/oct/13/mark-carney-fossil-fuel-reserves-burned-carbon-bubble](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/oct/13/mark-carney-fossil-fuel-reserves-burned-carbon-bubble)
  - [www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-44357243](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-44357243)
  - [www.businessgreen.com/bg/news/3029788/mark-carney-warns-of-potential-catastrophic-climate-impact-on-financial-markets](http://www.businessgreen.com/bg/news/3029788/mark-carney-warns-of-potential-catastrophic-climate-impact-on-financial-markets)
- 6) Previous plans and strategies include: Taunton Deane Carbon Management and Local Resilience Strategy, West Somerset Community Climate Change Strategy 2008-2012, and Carbon Management Plans for both authorities.
- 7) This includes scope 1, 2 and 3 greenhouse gas emissions, which are explained at: [www.carbontrust.com/resources/faqs/services/scope-3-indirect-carbon-emissions](http://www.carbontrust.com/resources/faqs/services/scope-3-indirect-carbon-emissions)