

Motions

The following amendment to his original Motion has been submitted by Councillor Henry Hobhouse:-

Motion to South Somerset District Council to Declare a Climate and Ecological Emergency

Notes for Council:

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 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 breached by 2030. The Panel warned that there are 12 years to limit climate change to avoid a global catastrophe. 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. The International Panel on the Environment and Biodiversity (IPEB) report, released this month, in addition to the IPCC report, states that we are at risk of one million species' of animal becoming extinct within the next few decades. This will have a devastating effect on the symbiotic relationship of all life and a potential threat to human extinction will increase as a result if action is not taken now to prevent the collapse of the ecosystem.
6. 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. 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. Councils around the UK and the world are responding by declaring a 'Climate Emergency' and committing resources to address this. (4)

Council is therefore recommend to:

1. Note the above.
2. Declare its recognition of a 'Climate and Ecological Emergency'.
3. Develop a Strategy by the Full Council meeting on 19th September 2019, that sets ambitious targets to protect the environment and ecology; to reduce Carbon Emissions; and for a) South Somerset District and b) the Council to become carbon neutral
4. Develop a delivery plan that sets out the necessary policies, projects and actions to deliver the targets, and identifies the resources necessary to enable the delivery of the strategy.
5. Work with councils and other partners in Somerset to develop collaboration, joint approaches and share resources in tackling climate change and protecting the environment

References:

1. Fossil CO₂ & GHG emissions of all world countries, 2017: <http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/overview.php?v=CO2andGHG1970-2016&dst=GHGpc>
2. World Resources Institute: <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/8-things-you-need-know-about-ipcc-15-c-report>
3. The IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>
4. Councils declaring climate and ecological emergencies
<https://climateemergency.uk/blog/map-of-local-council-declarations>
Berkeley: <https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/blog/2018/6/13/berkeley-unanimously-declares-climate-emergency> and
Hoboken: <https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/blog/2018/4/25/hoboken-resolves-to-mobilize> and the C40 cities: <https://www.c40.org/other/deadline-2020>
5. Scope 1, 2 and 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol explained: <https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/faqs/services/scope-3-indirect-carbon-emissions>