

Agenda item 5

For decision - Frome Town Council to declare a climate emergency and sign up to Covenant of Mayors

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Summary

It is now clear that the world has less than 12 years to switch away from fossil fuels to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Reducing energy use and switching to clean energy will also increase energy security, improve air quality, minimise fuel poverty, boost the local economy and provide jobs and training.

It is proposed that Frome Town Council declares a climate emergency and commits to going carbon neutral by 2030. This will help to raise the profile of this vital issue and secure external support and funding. It is also proposed that Frome Town Council also signs up to the Covenant of Mayors to track our progress and link with towns around the world who are cutting emissions.

Overall science/context

The International Panel on Climate Changeⁱ published a new report in October which concludes that we have less than 12 years to act to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. The report describes the enormous harm that a 2°C rise in global temperatures is likely to cause compared to a 1.5°C rise. It told us that limiting global warming to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities.

As well as increasing temperatures and more extreme weather, human activities are also having a massive impact on nature. The worldwide population of mammals, birds, fish and aquatic creatures, amphibians and reptiles have plunged by almost 60 percent, since 1970. Current rates of species extinction are 100- to 1,000-times higher than the 'standard rate' of extinctionⁱⁱ. There are also huge health impacts associated with fossil fuels, for example, air pollution causes 40,000 excess deaths every year in the UK and reduces average life span globally by 2 yearsⁱⁱⁱ.

To reduce the chance of runaway global warming and limit the effects of climate breakdown, it is imperative that, as a species, we reduce our CO₂eq (carbon equivalent) emissions from their current 6.5 tonnes per person per year to less than 2 tonnes as soon as possible.^{iv} Individuals cannot be expected to make this reduction on their own. Society needs to change its laws, taxation, infrastructure etc., to make low carbon living easier and the new norm. The good news is there are many social, environmental and economic benefits in doing so.

What we've done so far in Frome

Frome Town Council has already shown leadership in addressing the issue of climate breakdown. In 2016, the Council unanimously agreed to become a zero-carbon town by 2046 and we developed a plan showing how this could be achieved. Unfortunately, given the new

data from the IPCC, our current plans and actions are now not enough. The world is on track to overshoot the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit before 2050^{v,vi}. Councils around the world are responding by declaring a 'climate emergency' and committing resources to address this crucial issue.^{vii} Declaring an emergency will help to raise the profile of the issue and leverage in the extra support we need to achieve the necessary carbon reductions.

Taking action in Frome

To achieve these ambitious but vital targets will require a huge change in our infrastructure, it will need lots of investment and support from national government. However, it is achievable and will not only reduce climate risk but will increase energy security, improve air quality, minimise fuel poverty, boost the local economy and provide jobs and training. For example:

- Insulating houses: heating demands and costs can be reduced by 40% through increasing energy efficiency in homes.
- Going electric: shifting from diesel and petrol vehicles to electric reduces the energy needed for transport as electric vehicles are five times more efficient on average. This also helps to improve air quality.
- For Frome to become zero carbon in domestic electricity would only require a mix from around 8 wind turbines; links to 2 or 3 solar farms or more roof based solar; and/or further hydro schemes in the river.

Frome Town Council's current work programme already includes key actions such as:

1. Working with Frome Renewable Energy Co-op, other renewable energy companies and sustainability groups to maximise uptake in the town
2. Working with Mendip's planning team to maximise energy efficiency and renewable generation in new developments such as Saxonvale
3. Working with land agents to identify opportunities for wind, hydro and solar energy
4. Promoting insulation offers
5. Promoting and provide charge points for electric vehicles via Zero Carbon World
6. Working with schools, businesses and other organisations to reduce their energy costs and carbon emissions.
7. Developing a climate emergency plan to enable communities to become more resilient in the face of more extreme weather such as flooding and heat.

The Covenant of Mayors

To further support the work of the Council, it is proposed that we join the "Covenant of Mayors". This is a free network of towns and cities around the globe who have committed to reducing carbon emissions by 40% by 2030. The network enables members to share best practice, ideas and funding. It also entails submitting a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP) every two years which enables towns to track progress towards meeting the zero carbon targets. The Frome SECAP has been prepared by a resilience summer placement this year.

Recommendations

1. Declare a 'Climate Emergency'
2. Pledge to make Frome carbon neutral by 2030;
3. Call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible
4. Sign up to the Covenant of Mayors;
5. Develop a detailed plan of action and report back to council in six months time.
6. Reports to Council in six months with an update on the actions being taken to address this emergency.

ⁱ www.picc.ch The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the leading international body for the assessment of climate change. Set up by the UN and World Meteorological Society with 195 countries as members.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/30/humanity-wiped-out-animals-since-1970-major-report-finds>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/20/air-pollution-cuts-global-average-lifespan-by-nearly-two-years-study>

^{iv} Fossil CO₂ & GHG emissions of all world countries, 2017:

<http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/overview.php?v=CO2andGHG1970-2016&dst=GHGpc>

^v World Resources Institute: <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/8-things-you-need-know-about-ipcc-15-c-report>

^{vi} The IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>

^{vii} Including Bristol City Council and Berkeley:

<https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/blog/2018/6/13/berkeley-unanimously-declares-climate-emergency>, and the C40 cities: <https://www.c40.org/other/deadline-2020>