

Motion for Totnes Town Council – Full Council on December 3rd 2018
Declare a Climate Emergency

Full Council notes:

1. Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt around the world. Global temperatures have already increased by 1 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels. Atmospheric CO₂ levels are above 400 parts per million (ppm). This far exceeds the 350 ppm deemed to be a safe level for humanity;
2. In order to reduce the chance of runaway Global Warming and limit the effects of Climate Breakdown, it is imperative that we as a species 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[1];
3. 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;
4. Carbon emissions result from both production and consumption;
5. Totnes Town Council has already shown foresight and leadership when it comes to addressing the issue of climate change when back in 2009 we signed up to become a Transition Town Council, a clear recognition of the need to respond to Climate Change and we have since recognised this in our strategies, actions plans and decisions such as having declared a Frack Free Zone, supporting energy efficiency and renewable energy measures, etc;
6. Unfortunately, our current plans and actions are not enough. The world is on track to overshoot the Paris Agreement's 1.5 degrees Celsius limit before 2050;[2]
7. The IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius, published last month, describes the enormous harm that a 2 degrees Celsius rise is likely to cause compared to a 1.5 degrees Celsius, and told us that limiting Global Warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities;[3]
8. Local Councils around the world are responding by declaring a 'Climate Emergency' and committing resources to address this emergency.[4]

Full Council believes that:

1. All governments (national, regional and local) have a duty to limit the negative impacts of Climate Breakdown, and local governments that recognize this should not wait for their national governments to change their policies. It is important for the residents of Totnes and the UK that town, cities and counties commit to carbon neutrality as quickly as possible;
2. Towns, Cities and Local Authorities at all tiers are uniquely placed to lead the world in reducing carbon emissions; they are well placed to help decarbonize villages and more remote areas as they have closer links with their residents;[5]
3. As Totnes is renowned in the UK and around the world for social and environmental innovation, we have a particular duty and opportunity to be a leader on addressing Climate Breakdown;
4. The consequences of global temperature rising above 1.5 degrees Celsius are so severe that preventing this from happening must be humanity's number one priority; and,
5. Bold climate action can deliver economic benefits in terms of new jobs, economic savings and market opportunities, as well as improved personal, social and environmental well-being for people, locally and worldwide.

Full Council thus:

1. Declares a 'Climate Emergency';
2. Pledge to make the town of Totnes carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions (scope 1,2,3);[6]
3. Call on Devon County Council, South Hams District Council and Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible and to appoint Citizens assemblies to develop the policies to deliver this target;
4. Work with other local authority organisations such as DALC (Devon Association of Local Governments) and appropriate government departments

(both within the UK and internationally) to determine and implement best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels;

5. Continue to work with partners across the district, county and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans;
6. Place this issue on Council Committee agendas to agree strategies and action plans.
7. Report to Full Council within six months with the actions the Council will take to address this emergency.

Proposed by Cllr Jacqi Hodgson

23rd November 2018

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 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>

[4] For example Bristol and Manchester City Councils: <https://www.businessgreen.com/bg/news/3066475/bristol-and-manchester-unveil-fresh-plans-to-tackle-climate-emergency>

Also US cities,

Berkeley: <https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/blog/2018/4/25/hoboken-resolves-to-mobilize> And the C40 cities: <https://www.c40.org/other/deadline>

[5] ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, provides many examples of good practice, models and toolkits for Climate Change Adaptation and Urban Resilience: <http://iclei-europe.org/topics/climate-change-adaptation-urban-resilience/>

[6] Scope 1,2 and 3 of the Greenhouse Gas protocol explained: <https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/faqs/services/scope-3-indirect-carbon-emissions>

