



PRESS RELEASE - For immediate release

Climate Emergency campaign launched across two counties

Environmental, community and faith organisations [1] across Surrey and West Sussex are joining forces for the first time in a campaign to urge their County Councils to step up action on climate change by declaring a 'Climate Emergency'.

Motions to declare a Climate Emergency will be coming up for debate at both County Councils in the next three weeks. The campaign aims to show the breadth of support for more decisive action by councils in addressing the urgent threat posed by climate change.

“Declaring a Climate Emergency is a way of shifting climate change to the centre of council agendas, and showing leadership,” according to retired GP, Dr Sally Barnard, who is helping coordinate the campaign. “It means recognising publicly that ‘business as usual’ is not going to be good enough to tackle this massive global challenge.”

So far 40 Councils across the UK have already declared a climate emergency and the number is rising rapidly. Devon and Somerset County Councils are amongst the latest to declare.

The draft motions being tabled aim to make West Sussex and Surrey carbon neutral by 2030. This is well ahead of national carbon reduction targets.

The Surrey motion is being debated on March 19th. It was tabled by Councillor Jonathan Essex, Green Party member for Redhill East. Pointing to the benefits of taking action now it argues that ‘Bold climate action can deliver economic benefits to Surrey in terms of valuable new jobs, essential economic savings and much needed market opportunities’ and urges the Council to take on a leadership role in reducing carbon emissions

The West Sussex motion comes up for debate on April 5th, and was put forward by Councillor Michael Jones, Labour member for Southgate and Gossops Green. Underlining the severity of the climate threat, it states that ‘West Sussex is already suffering from flooding problems, and a significant proportion of its population and a large number of its settlements are based in coastal areas which would potentially be devastated by a rise in sea levels caused by continual global warming.’

The campaign to support these climate emergency declarations is being led by the South East Climate Alliance (SECA), and new umbrella group of more than 20 local environmental, community and faith groups from across the region. “We are taking a deliberately cross-party approach”, says Dr Barnard, “since the scale of the climate challenge is way bigger than party politics”. The aim is to mobilise a letter writing campaign from residents across both Surrey and West Sussex to urge their local County Councillors to support the motions. Details of how to get involved are on the SECA website.

The campaign chimes in with the global ‘Strike 4 Climate’ movement encouraging school children to take time out of school to make their voices heard. “With the youth rising up we must show them that action is being taken,” says environment campaigner, Nicola Peel. “We cannot wait and just talk about climate breakdown any longer. It is imperative we act.”

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Interviews with spokespersons available upon request

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NOTES:

[1] For more information on the South East Climate Alliance see <https://seclimatealliance.uk/>

[2] The text of the West Sussex County Council motion can be found at:

<https://westsussex.moderngov.co.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=3613>

[3] Text of Surrey County Council motion:

<https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=121&Mid=6657&Ver=4>

[4] The next Strike 4 Climate day is this Friday, March 15th. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47250424>

Photos:



Photo caption: The affects of climate change are already plain to see: flooding in the Adur Valley 2013/14 (credit Frank Bull)



Campaigners joined forces on World SOS Climate Emergency Day