

**Report to:** Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change

**Date of meeting:** 14 September 2021

**By:** Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

**Title:** Notice of Motion: To Support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill

**Purpose:** To consider a Notice of Motion calling for the County Council to support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:** *The Lead Member is recommended to recommend that the County Council rejects the Motion for the reasons set out in the report.*

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## **1 Background**

1.1 The following Notice of Motion has been submitted by Councillor Georgia Taylor:

*Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt in the UK and around the world. Global temperatures have increased by over 1 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels. Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels are above 400 parts per million (ppm) and continue to rise—this far exceeds the 350 ppm deemed to be a safe level for humanity.*

*Without more significant and sustained action, the world is set to exceed the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit between 2030 and 2040. Therefore, the current UK target of net zero by 2050 is not sufficient. It is too little too late.*

*The increase in harm caused by a rise of 2°C rather than 1.5°C is significant. This is described by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C published in October 2018. According to the IPCC, limiting heating to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector and local communities. The costs of failing to address this crisis will far outstrip the investments required to prevent it. Investing now will bring many benefits in the form of good jobs, breathable cities and thriving communities.*

*Council notes that:*

- 1) Many local authorities are playing an important role in the UK taking action to achieve net zero*
- 2) There is a Bill before Parliament—the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill (published as the Climate and Ecology Bill)—according to which the UK Government must develop an emergency strategy that:
  - a) requires that the UK plays its fair and proper role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions consistent with at least a 66% chance of limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures; this corresponds to the most ambitious global mitigation pathway available according to the 2018 IPCC 1.5C Report.*
  - b) ensures that all the UK's consumption emissions are accounted for, including international aviation and passenger shipping;**

- c) *ensures that steps to mitigate emissions do not damage ecosystems, food and water availability, and human health;*
- d) *ensures that steps taken to increase the health, abundance, diversity and resilience of species, populations and ecosystems follow the mitigation and conservation hierarchy - avoid, minimise, restore and offset*
- e) *restores and expands natural ecosystems, and enhances the management of cultivated ecosystems to protect and enhance biodiversity, ecological processes and ecosystem service provision, including optimising the state of resilient carbon sinks;*
- f) *includes measures to protect, restore and enhance ecosystems in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, where activity is generated from within the United Kingdom that is harmful to ecosystems;*
- g) *ensures an end to the exploration, extraction, export and import of fossil fuels by the United Kingdom as rapidly as possible; and*
- h) *sets up an independent citizens' assembly, representative of the UK's population, to engage with the UK Parliament and UK Government to help develop the emergency strategy.*

*The County Council resolves to:*

- 1) *Support the Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill;*
- 2) *Inform the local media of this decision;*
- 3) *Write to local Members of Parliament, asking them to support or thanking them for supporting the CEE Bill; and*
- 4) *Write to the CEE Bill Alliance, the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, expressing its support ([campaign@ceebill.uk](mailto:campaign@ceebill.uk)).*"

1.2 In line with County Council practice, the matter has been referred by the Chairman to the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change for consideration to provide information and inform debate on the Motion. The Lead Member's recommendation on this Notice of Motion will be reported to the Council at its meeting on 12 October 2021.

## **2 Supporting Information**

2.1 The Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill, formally known as the Climate and Ecology Bill, was presented to Parliament by Caroline Lucas as a Private Members Bill in September 2020. A full copy of the Bill is included in Appendix 1. It should be noted that the Bill is still progressing through the Parliamentary process and could be amended when it is debated by the House of Commons and House of Lords.

2.2 The main objective of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill is to set more ambitious aims for addressing climate change and biodiversity loss than are currently committed to through existing legislation and policy. The Bill would:

- Require the government to set a new legally binding climate target in order to contribute to keeping the global average temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels.
- Give the Secretary of State a duty to create and implement a strategy to achieve those objectives.
- Establish a temporary Climate and Nature Assembly, representative of the UK population, to work with the Secretary of State in creating that strategy, which would be subject to approval by the House of Commons.

2.3 The Bill would require that the United Kingdom (UK) takes account of the UK's entire carbon footprint, including consumption emissions released overseas as a result of goods manufactured abroad for use in the UK, rather than just the emissions produced in the UK. It would also require legally-binding annual carbon budgets rather than the current 5 year carbon budgets.

2.4 A Climate and Ecological Emergency Alliance in support of the Bill was launched in September 2020. It currently has the support of 114 MPs, and a number of local authorities and other organisations.

2.5 The urgency of addressing climate change is undisputed. Climate change impacts are linked to and likely to worsen existing inequalities, particularly related to gender and income. The UK government has set a legally binding target under the Climate Change Act to reach net zero emissions by 2050. However, it is unclear how the Bill would enable the UK to get to net zero any faster than the current commitment within the Climate Change Act, as there are no provisions within the Bill that explain this. There are also no provisions within the Bill to explain how it will deliver measurable ecological improvements more effectively than commitments already set out in existing legislation or in the Environment Bill 2020.

2.6 The Committee on Climate Change, which is the independent body that advises government on climate change, has set out how England could get to net zero by 2050. It has concluded that it is technically feasible but highly challenging and is entirely contingent on a number of factors. These include the introduction of clear, stable and well-designed national policies and interventions, the appropriate supply chain able to deliver the required scale and pace of change, and an unprecedented level of public involvement and consent for change.

2.7 At present, the government does not have an agreed national decarbonisation plan, and there is no single agreed pathway to get to net zero. Over the next year or so the government has said that it will produce a net zero strategy, a heat and buildings strategy, an industrial decarbonisation strategy, a hydrogen strategy, a nature strategy, the Environment Act and the Agriculture Act, amongst others. Collectively, these are expected to set out in detail how the UK will transition to net zero and address biodiversity loss. It is recommended that the County Council allows for this significant body of forthcoming legislation and strategies to come forward and take effect, and uses the opportunity to respond to consultations, before considering supporting changes such as those set out in the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill.

### **3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 The County Council recognises the urgency of addressing climate change and biodiversity loss, as reflected in its climate emergency action plan and its lead role in the Sussex Local Nature Partnership. However, the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill does not set out how its enactment would address climate change or biodiversity loss any more effectively than current or anticipated legislation and strategies. For this reason, the Lead Member is recommended to recommend to the County Council that the Notice of Motion be rejected.

#### **RUPERT CLUBB**

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#### LOCAL MEMBERS:

All.

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

none.