

**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date of Meeting:** 3 April 2019  
**Public Document:** Yes  
**Exemption:** None



**Review date for release** None

**Subject:** **Environmental sustainability and climate change emergency.**

**Purpose of report:** This report has been written to explore, highlight and refresh our environmental commitments and contributions towards addressing climate change.  
As a council we are well placed to influence, promote and lead local initiatives to protect and enhance our environment, which is consistent with our valuing the outstanding environment theme in the Council Plan. There is logic in all local authorities working together on this agenda and the report proposes that we work with Devon County Council following their recent consideration of a climate change emergency motion.

Devon County Council's Cabinet has recommended that the authority declare a 'climate emergency' and forge ahead with a county-wide partnership to ensure that Devon is carbon neutral by 2050.

The notice of motion follows the latest warnings from the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of the devastation a 2°C rise in global temperatures could cause.

The DCC Cabinet's recommendation to Full Council that the authority declare the emergency was made at Devon County Council's Cabinet meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

The 15<sup>th</sup> Special Report from the IPCC, published late last year, also identifies the global benefits of limiting warming to 1.5°C by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Consequently, DCC have said that they will be working with strategic partners across the county to ensure the county doing what it can to meet the IPCC carbon reduction recommendations.

**Recommendation:** **That we work with Devon County Council on a shared climate change programme, and signal our commitment to tackling climate change in areas where we can affect positive and meaningful change in our activities, and those of our partners, communities and residents.**

**Reason for recommendation:** To ensure that this Council states its position and contributes towards tackling climate change where we can make a positive impact. There is an opportunity to work in collaboration with Devon County Council and others to ensure we are coordinated and have the greatest impact.

<b>Officer:</b>	John Golding – Strategic Lead Housing, Health & Environment.
<b>Financial implications:</b>	To be completed by Finance.
<b>Legal implications:</b>	To be completed by Legal.
<b>Equalities impact:</b>	Medium Impact
<b>Risk:</b>	High Risk There is a high risk globally if we do nothing to try and combat the impacts of climate change.
<b>Links to background information:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• n/a</li> </ul>
<b>Link to Council Plan:</b>	Delivering and sustaining an outstanding environment.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In this report I am suggesting that we review our commitments towards protecting our environment and identify a series of commitments that we will work towards (in partnership) aimed at reducing climate change, promoting environmental sustainability, and minimising the damaging impact of our occupancy of the planet.
- 1.2 I have tried to take global issues and make them relevant to interventions and actions that we as a small district council can do to affect positive change locally. This is consistent with the old Think Globally: Act Locally message that remains relevant today.
- 1.3 We have significant influence as a community leader and organisation committed to protecting and enhancing our outstanding environment. We have numerous environmental commitments contained in our Council Plan (**annex 1**) and Service Plans that demonstrate our environmental credentials. However, we cannot be complacent and I am suggesting that we review our ambitions and challenge ourselves to higher aspirations and influence to protect our outstanding environment.
- 1.4 This report proposes that we work with other local authorities to provide greater weight and impact against climate change. Specifically, Devon County Council and other Devon districts, where joint action can bring about positive change. It is clear from the scientific evidence that radical change is required to manage the impact of climate change.
- 1.5 A useful resource in preparing this paper has been the LGA campaign called Climate Local. Although a few years old now the content remains relevant to local authority work in this field.
- 1.6 There are many environmental issues where we can influence behaviour, and others where we can through direct intervention, regulation and enabling change in the way individuals and communities act. As an example, the district heating scheme at Cranbrook has been innovative, and the work on the Greater Exeter Strategic Partnership (GESP) will influence reduced carbon emissions from new developments. The low carbon evidence base has been published [www.gesp.org.uk/evidence](http://www.gesp.org.uk/evidence).
- 1.7 At the end of 2018 the Government published an ambitious Waste and Resources paper which recognised the need to act in a meaningful way to change our use of natural resources and waste production. The paper links with the Government's Environment Plan published earlier in 2018.

## **2. The recent DCC Climate Change motion**

- 2.1 DCC have stated in a recent motion to their Cabinet that - 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 CO<sub>2</sub> levels are above 400 parts per million (ppm). This far exceeds the 350 ppm deemed to be a safe level for humanity;
- 2.2 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 CO<sub>2</sub>eq (carbon equivalent) emissions from their current 6.5 tonnes per person per year to less than 2 tonnes as soon as possible;
- 2.3 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;
- 2.4 Carbon emissions result from both production and consumption;
- 2.5 Devon County Council has already shown foresight and leadership when it comes to addressing the issue of climate change when back in 2004 we signed up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change and has since recognised this in its strategy for responding to the Climate Change Act 2008 which underpins its strategies, actions plans, public statements and advice to businesses, residents and parish councils;
- 2.6 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;
- 2.8 Local Authorities around the world are responding by declaring a 'Climate Emergency' and committing resources to address this emergency.
- 2.9 The motion asked the Council to agree the following:
  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 Devon and the UK that counties commit to carbon neutrality as quickly as possible;
  2. Local Authorities are uniquely placed to lead the world in reducing carbon emissions;
  3. 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,
  4. Bold climate action can deliver economic benefits in terms of new jobs, economic savings and market opportunities (as well as improved well-being for people worldwide).
- 2.10 I am sure that there is much we empathise with in this motion.

### **3. Officer advice to DCC Cabinet**

- 3.1 As part of the Cabinet report DCC officers advised - The 15th Special Report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlights the projected global effects of a 1.5°C warmer world, for example: 20-30% of all species will be at risk of extinction; 90% of tropical coral reefs will be lost; cereal yields will reduce; and droughts become more common. For the UK, average, annual precipitation is projected to increase by 10%.
- 3.2 The Special Report also identifies the global benefits of limiting warming to 1.5°C instead of 2°C: 50% fewer species will be at risk of major contraction in their geographic range; 10.4 million fewer people will be displaced due to sea level rise; 420 million fewer people will be exposed to extreme heatwaves; the chance of sea-ice-free Arctic summers will reduce to 1 in 100, instead of 1 in 10; and a shift in the geographic range of malaria only occurs above 1.5°C. The increase in average, annual rainfall over the UK is halved.
- 3.3 Global energy demand continues to rise, and the increase in 2017 was predominantly met by new gas installations, followed by investment in renewables mainly in China and the USA. Due to the continued reliance on fossil fuels, global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions also rose in 2017, following a plateau between 2013 and 2016.
- 3.4 The IPCC recommend reducing global GHG emissions by 45% by 2030 in comparison to 2010 levels, reaching net-zero by 2050. The required scale of change to energy, industrial and infrastructure systems that need to take place to achieve this have no historic precedent. The UK Committee on Climate Change, the independent advisory body that monitors the implementation of the Climate Change Act, has been asked by government to recommend a revised target for the UK. This is expected in March 2019.
- 3.5 DCC's GHG emissions have reduced by 36% since 2012/13. DCC's Corporate Energy Policy targets are under review by the Environmental Performance Board to set more stretching, but realistic, goals. DCC also reviewed its Climate Change Strategy in 2018, which commits the authority to support the UK to meet its carbon targets by prioritising GHG reduction from its own activities, areas of influence and by encouraging others to do the same.
- 3.6 Achieving further significant cuts will require collective action - DCC cannot mandate or achieve this by itself. Becoming carbon neutral by 2030, just 12 years' time, does not appear to be feasible; a recent analysis shows that this would require the implementation of all current national policy measures in full and the development of substantial new policy at all levels of government where there are currently gaps. A 45% reduction by the same date, as recommended by the IPCC, should be the absolute backstop.
- 3.7 Collaborative discussions are already occurring within Devon to encourage more activity at strategic, community and individual levels. DCC could use its position to facilitate these further.
- 3.8 This presents an opportunity for us to work with DCC to define how, what and where we can contribute towards the climate change challenge.

### **4. A way forward**

- 4.1 This is a huge subject matter and one where we must act now, and act decisively and collectively. The latest evidence indicates that radical action is required and not just further tinkering or shallow commitments, but action that has a genuine positive impact on climate change. This will require meaningful commitments and a significant change in lifestyles.

- 4.2 Our to be updated Council Plan needs to reflect our renewed commitments and demonstrate to our residents, partners and communities that we mean to make changes that may be unpopular with some, but necessary for the benefit of future generations.
- 4.3 Whilst we have the willingness to do something more meaningful we don't have the expertise in what is a complex and scientific work stream where specialist advice is required to ensure that our interventions are having the impact necessary. So I am suggesting that we should work collaboratively. DCC are working with the University of Exeter and others who can draw in the necessary experts to ensure that any plans we adopt have the impact we are seeking.
- 4.4 I propose indicating to DCC that we support their concerns around climate change and want to work with them to combat the worst effects of global warming, sea rise and environmental pollution.