

Councillor Gwenna Harman & Councillor Andy Stokes
Motion for Buckfastleigh Town Council to
Declare a Climate Emergency

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 possibleⁱ;
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. 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;ⁱⁱ
6. The IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius, published in October 2018, 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;ⁱⁱⁱ
7. Local Councils around the world are responding by declaring a 'Climate Emergency' and committing resources to address this emergency.^{iv}

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 Buckfastleigh 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;^v
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 personal, social and environmental well-being for people, locally and worldwide.

Council thus:

1. Declares a 'Climate Emergency';
2. Pledge to do whatever is in our power to make the town of Buckfastleigh carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions (scope 1,2,3);
3. As a first step, we will initiate and support a Buckfastleigh working group/citizens assembly to investigate possible local responses and make recommendations for actions to council.
4. Call on Devon County Council, Teignbridge 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;
5. Work with other local authorities, neighbouring local councils (Totnes for example), appropriate government departments (both within the UK and internationally) and other organisations to determine, implement and deliver best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels;
6. Will place this issue on Council Committee agendas to agree strategies and action plans and regularly review progress.
7. Will, within six months and at regular intervals thereafter, consider and take action on recommendations to address this emergency.

- i Fossil CO2 & GHG emissions of all world countries, 2017
<http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/overview.php?v=CO2andGHG1970-2016&dst=GHGpc>
- ii World Resources Institute: <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/8-things-you-need-know-about-ipcc-15-c-report>
- iii The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>
- iv 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, Berkley: <https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/blog/2018/4/25/hoboken-resolves-to-mobilize> And the C40 cities: <https://www.c40.org/other/deadline>
- v 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/>