

Motion to Tewkesbury Borough Council to widen the scope for our Climate Emergency to include the whole Borough, to declare a Nature (Ecological) Emergency and Support the Climate and Ecology Bill.

This motion contains two intrinsically linked urgent necessities.

In July 2019, I brought a motion to Tewkesbury Borough Council to declare a climate emergency and do all in its powers to make the Borough carbon neutral by 2030.

Tewkesbury Borough Council was the last district in Gloucestershire to declare a Climate Emergency and this finally passed on 1st October 2019, but was at the time reduced to only include tackling emissions created by the Council itself and a few other public service properties it owns within the Borough:

“The Council has committed to become carbon neutral by 2030 by addressing greenhouse gas emissions from our operations, including:

- Electricity, gas and water use in our buildings that are used to provide a public service
- The Council’s vehicle fleet
- Travel by employees and Councillors in vehicles or by public transport for Council purposes
- Office waste”

An excellent start has been made and I would like to give credit to officers who have worked incredibly hard gathering data, applying for funding and creating a carbon reduction programme. We now have the impressive solar canopy and several other initiatives, however, it is time to widen our reach to include the whole borough, we even say so on our website:

“Having looked at the Council’s own Carbon footprint the next steps will then be to support residents, businesses, community groups and other organisations to tackle greenhouse gas emissions across the Borough.”

I believe that we can do both at the same time, in fact it will be beneficial; that residents, businesses, community groups and other organisations increasingly want to be involved and will in turn support the whole borough on our collective journey to carbon neutrality. Climate Emergency UK has been working on Council Climate Plan Scorecards. The average Council is scoring 43% but, Tewkesbury is currently on just 10%. Climate Emergency UK say;

“Engagement and support from residents is essential in carrying out your Climate Action Plan. Involving a diverse range of residents from all sectors of your community from the beginning will help ensure that a wider variety of ideas are heard and that solutions to problems can be found collectively.”

Businesses also want to get involved by sharing their ideas and examples of best practice, we don’t need to be doing this alone. Widening our scope could encourage private investment and unite our Borough in achieving carbon neutrality.

Here’s another quote from TBC’s website:

“Without increased and urgent mitigation ambition in the coming years, leading to a sharp decline in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, global warming will surpass 1.5°C in the following decades, leading to irreversible loss of the most fragile ecosystems, and crisis after crisis for the most vulnerable people and societies.” (Source: IPCC, 2018: Global Warming of 1.5°C.)”

In order to reduce the chance of runaway Global Warming and limit the effects of Climate Breakdown, it is imperative that we as species reduce our CO₂eq (carbon equivalent) emissions from their current 6.5 tonnes per year to less than 2 tonnes as soon as possible;

Carbon emissions result from both production and consumption. In Gloucestershire the consequences of no action include:

- Increased risk of flash flooding and the resulting damage to buildings, crops, farmland and infrastructure as a result of more extreme rainfall events.
- Health problems due to increased heat stress particularly for vulnerable adults and children.
- Increased costs associated with changes to crops and biodiversity.
- Higher energy costs.
- Crop failures associated with extreme heat, such as was experienced in 2018 and 2022.

The government believes that a shift to a very low carbon energy future represents the best course for the country’s economic development while lowering the risk of fuel poverty and reducing air pollution.

The second element of this motion is intrinsically linked and recognises the need for a declaration of a nature, (ecological) emergency.

This can be found on Tewkesbury Borough Council’s website:

Biodiversity

“Tree planting activity has been undertaken on the Council’s land and we are working with Gloucestershire County Council to identify further opportunities to support carbon capture through nature.”

But that’s the only mention of nature recovery, ecology or biodiversity.

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 1.2°C from pre-industrial levels and the natural world has reached crisis point, with 28% of plants and animals currently threatened with extinction.

Unless we drastically change course, the world is set to exceed the Paris Agreement's safe 1.5°C limit. Pledges like the Paris Agreement and updated emissions targets are not legally binding. The gap between pledges and policies leaves the world on course for catastrophic warming of near 3%. As the 2018 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made clear, every half a degree makes a world of difference: severe climate impacts with 1.5°C of warming, such as extreme weather patterns causing flooding and heat waves, get significantly worse with 2°C. 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 UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world and more than one in seven of our plants and animals face extinction and more than 40% are in decline. We have lost 95% of our hedgehogs. The UK needs a legally-enforceable nature target so that by 2030 nature is visibly and measurably on the path of recovery, in line with the Global Goal for Nature and the Leaders' Pledge for Nature.

Investing in wildlife gives at least a three-fold economic return. Protecting biodiversity and nature pays.

Council notes that:

Many local authorities are playing an important role in the UK taking action to achieve net zero carbon emissions, and to protect and revitalise local wildlife and natural habitats. Parliament in May 2019 declared an Environment and Climate Emergency and this Council has declared a Climate Emergency.

We further note that:

There is a Bill before Parliament - the *Climate and Ecology Bill* - which, if it becomes law, would require the UK Government to develop a strategy to address the climate-nature crisis that would ensure:

- A. that the ecological crisis is tackled shoulder to shoulder with the climate crisis, in a joined-up approach;
- B. that the Paris Agreement is enshrined into law to ensure that the UK does its fair share of the global carbon budget to limit planetary temperature rise to the safest end of the Paris Agreement (1.5°C);
- C. the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, echoed in the Montreal Agreement reached at the UN Biodiversity summit, COP15, is enshrined into law to ensure that nature loss and degradation is in reverse by 2030;
- D. that the UK takes responsibility for our entire greenhouse gas footprint (i.e. consumption emissions, plus shipping, flights and land-based transport) by accounting for all of the emissions that take place overseas to manufacture, transport, and dispose of the goods and services we import and consume;
- E. that the UK takes responsibility for our ecological footprint, so that we protect health and resilience of ecosystems along both domestic and our global supply chains;
- F. an independent, temporary 'Climate and Nature Assembly' is set-up, representative of the UK's population, to engage with the UK Parliament and UK Government to help develop the strategy.

Council therefore resolves to:

- I. Extend our current scope and declare a Borough wide "Climate and Ecological Emergency";
- II. Commit to doing all in its power to make Tewkesbury Borough carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions;
- III. Commit to doing all in power eliminate the council's scope 3 emissions through the development of a carbon neutral procurement strategy.
- IV. Continue its Climate Action and Flood Risk Working Group;
- V. Call again upon the UK Government to provide additional powers and resources to support local and national action towards the 2030 target;
- VI. Commit again to working with partners in Gloucestershire to achieve county-wide carbon neutrality aims;

We further resolve to:

- VII. Declare a nature (ecological) emergency; recognising that the threat to continued human wellbeing from the loss of biodiversity and healthy habitats, whilst linked to the climate emergency, requires specific emergency measures for nature recovery.
- VIII. Declare our support for the Climate and Ecology Bill; inform the local media of this decision.
- IX. Write an open letter to Laurence Robertson MP, shared with our residents through local and social media, urging him to sign up to support the CE Bill; and
- X. Write to the Zero Hour, the organisers of the campaign for the CE Bill, expressing its support (councils@zerohour.uk).