

Motion to Eden District Council: Declaration of a Climate Emergency

Since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report of October 2018, Town, District, County and Metropolitan Councils of all political persuasions across the UK have passed motions committing them to addressing the climate crisis. Across the world local government bodies are doing the same. The following motion invites Eden District Council to join the many other Councils that are determined to make their contribution to tackling the climate crisis.

The scientific evidence of the threat we all face is undeniable. In relation to the IPCC report, Mary Robinson former President of Ireland and UN Special Envoy on Climate has said: "We have to understand that we face an existential threat that is going to undermine the future prospects for our children and grandchildren".

Unless we act on climate, we collectively face the greatest threat to our local and global environment.

Eden District Council notes:

1. The IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C describes the enormous harm that a 2°C rise is likely to cause compared to a 1.5°C rise. It informed us that limiting global warming to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities. (1,2)
2. The World Meteorological Organisation in their annual bulletin (Nov 2018) state that carbon dioxide levels have hit new highs of 405.5 parts per million (ppm) in 2017, up from 403.3 ppm in 2016 and 400.1 ppm in 2015, levels not seen for millions of years. They warn that "the window of opportunity for action is almost closed".
3. The world's leading climate scientists warn that there are only a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5°C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people.
4. Global temperatures have already increased by 1 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels and they are still rising rapidly, with impacts being felt around the world today.
5. The world is on track to overshoot the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit before 2050.
6. In order to reduce the very real risk of runaway global warming and the dramatic impacts on the global environment, society and us as individuals, it is imperative that we take the boldest steps to reduce our CO₂ emissions from their current 6.5 tonnes per person per year to less than 2 tonnes as soon as possible. (3)
7. Society needs to help individuals reduce their own carbon emissions by changing its laws, taxation, infrastructure, policies and plans, to make low carbon living the new norm.
8. Carbon emissions result from both production and consumption.
9. It is for these reasons that authorities around the country and the world are responding by declaring a 'Climate Emergency' and committing resources to address this emergency now.

Eden District Council acknowledges that:

1. The consequences of global temperature rising above 1.5°C are so severe that preventing this from happening must be humanity's number one priority.
2. To meet the urgent challenge outlined in the IPCC report, we all have a part to play. It is important for us all in Penrith and Eden that the District Council commits to carbon neutrality as quickly as possible. Eden District Council can lead where Cumbria County Council should follow.
3. 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.

This motion calls on Eden District Council to:

1. Declare a 'Climate Emergency';
2. Aim to make Eden District carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3); Ref 4
3. Call on Westminster to provide the powers, resources and help with funding to successfully meet the 2030 target;
4. Work with other councils and organisations (both within the UK and internationally) to determine and implement best practice methods to limit global warming to less than 1.5°C;
5. Work with partners in Parish, Town and Cumbria County Councils to help deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies, plans and shared resources;
6. Produce a fully costed action plan to meet the carbon neutral target to be presented to Full Council in 2019.

References:

1. World Resources Institute: <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/8things-you-need-know-about-ipcc-15-c-report>
2. The IPCC's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>
3. Fossil CO₂ & GHG emissions of all world countries, 2017:
<http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/overview.php?v=CO2andGHG1970-2016&dst=GHGpc> (opens in a new window)
4. Scope 1, 2 and 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol explained:
<https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/faqs/services/scope-3-indirect-carbon-emissions>.