

## Langport Town Council to acknowledge climate emergency

### Overall science/context

The International Panel on Climate Change published a new report in October concluding that we have less than 12 years to implement actions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. The report describes the enormous harm that a 2°C rise in global temperatures is likely to cause compared to a 1.5°C rise. The report detailed 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.

As well as increasing temperatures and more extreme weather, human activities are also having a massive impact on nature. The worldwide population of mammals, birds, fish and aquatic creatures, amphibians and reptiles have plunged by almost 60%, since 1970. Current rates of species extinction are 100- to 1,000-times higher than the 'standard rate' of extinction.

There are also huge health impacts associated with fossil fuels, for example, air pollution causes 40,000 excess deaths every year in the UK and reduces average life span globally by 2 years.

To reduce the chance of runaway global warming and limit the effects of climate breakdown, it is imperative that, as a species, we 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.

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. The good news is there are many social, environmental and economic benefits in doing so. What we've done so far in Langport Town Council has already shown leadership in addressing the issue of climate breakdown with our Green Charter which was adopted in 2012. Reducing energy use and switching to clean energy will also increase energy security, improve air quality, minimise fuel poverty, boost the local economy and provide jobs and training.

The world is on track to overshoot the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit before 2050, Councils around the world are responding by declaring a 'climate emergency' and committing resources to address this crucial issue. Declaring an emergency will help to raise the profile of the issue and leverage in the extra support we need to achieve the necessary carbon reductions.

Taking action in Langport to achieve these ambitious but vital targets will require a huge change in our infrastructure, it will need lots of investment and support from national government. However, it is achievable and will not only reduce climate risk but will also increase energy security, improve air quality, minimise fuel poverty, boost the local economy and provide jobs and training.

For example:

- Insulating houses: heating demands and costs can be reduced by 40% through increasing energy efficiency in homes.
- Going electric: shifting from diesel and petrol vehicles to electric reduces the energy needed for transport as electric vehicles are five times more efficient than fossil fuelled vehicles. They produce no tailpipe emissions and the electricity is increasingly produced by renewable energy which helps to improve overall air quality.
- For Langport to become zero carbon in domestic electricity it would only require a mix of wind turbine(s); link to solar farms or more roof based solar; and/or hydro schemes in the river.

Key actions:

Engaging with renewable energy companies and sustainability groups to maximise decarbonisation in the town, promoting insulation offers, renewable energy, electric transport.

Developing a climate emergency plan to enable communities to become more resilient in the face of more extreme weather such as flooding and heat.

#### The Covenant of Mayors

To further support the work of the Council, LTC could join the “[Covenant of Mayors](#)”. This is a free network of towns and cities around the globe who have committed to reducing carbon emissions by 40% by 2030. The network enables members to share best practice, ideas and funding. It also entails submitting a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP) every two years which enables towns to track progress towards meeting the zero carbon targets.

#### References:

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the leading international body for the assessment of climate change. Set up by the UN and World Meteorological Society with 195 countries as members.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/30/humanity-wiped-out-animals-since-1970-majorreport-finds>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/20/air-pollution-cuts-global-average-lifespan-by-nearly-two-years-study>

Fossil CO<sub>2</sub> & GHG emissions of all world countries, 2017:

<http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu/overview.php?v=CO2andGHG1970-2016&dst=GHGpc>

World Resources Institute:

<https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/8-things-you-need-know-about-ipcc-15-creport>

The IPCC’s Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C:

<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>

Including Bristol City Council and Berkeley:

<https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/blog/2018/6/13/berkeley-unanimously-declares-climate-emergency>, and the C40 cities: <https://www.c40.org/other/deadline-2020>

#### Recommendations:

1. Declare a ‘Climate Emergency’ This will help to raise the profile of this vital issue and secure external support and funding.
2. Pledge to support Langport to become carbon neutral by 2030;
3. Call on Westminster and other Governmental authorities to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible
4. Sign up to the Covenant of Mayors;
5. Engage with local groups and businesses to develop a plan of action and report back to council in six months time.

#### Motion:

**It is proposed that Langport Town Council acknowledges the climate emergency and will work with the relevant community groups to champion becoming a carbon neutral community by 2030.**