

Notice of Motion on Climate Emergency

This Council notes that there has been irreversible climate change in recent times, 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

This Council notes the recent conclusion of an interim report from scientists on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that every effort must be made to prevent the continuing average global temperature rise exceeding 1.5C above preindustrial levels. However, such an increase could, with present government policies, be reached as early as 2030, with further increases in the decades thereafter. Such a scale of temperature rise threatens both human civilisation and all other life forms on the planet, with drastic disruption of agriculture, and the loss of terrestrial and marine wildlife habitats.

We recognise that throughout the world, already, species of plants and animals are becoming extinct in record numbers; coral reefs, which are fundamental to marine life are dying; small island nations and coastal cities are threatened by sea level rise from the melting of polar ice sheets; the human death toll from adverse weather events – such as excess cold, excess heat, hurricane, flood – is increasing. The sixth assessment report on Climate change published in 2022 outlined the impacts climate change could have on ecosystems throughout the world. In Europe it is highly likely that there will be increased adverse impacts on food production and water scarcity, health and wellbeing, and impacts on cities, settlements and infrastructure. Residents of Neath Port Talbot have already experienced the effects of extreme weather noting recent flooding and heatwaves in 2022 which could only increase in frequency if we do not tackle climate crisis.

We recognise, as a Council, that individuals cannot be expected to make this reduction on their own, solely. Society needs to change its laws, taxation, infrastructure, etc., to make low carbon living easier and the new norm; We acknowledge that globally, the actions required to address climate change effectively rest with national governments and require international collaboration, but there is still important work that local councils can do.

We recognise the recent history of this council in aiming to do its utmost to reduce carbon emissions, enhance biodiversity, and secure a prosperous, low-carbon economy for our region. Unfortunately, our current plans and actions are not enough. The world is on track to overshoot the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit before 2050.

We recognise the importance of working closely with researchers in order to have the latest knowledge and the clearest understanding about what we can do to respond to the urgent need to address climate change.

This Council therefore declares climate emergency, and calls upon the government of the United Kingdom to do the same. We commit to:

1. Call upon the UK and Welsh governments to provide us with the necessary powers and resources to ensure Neath Port Talbot becomes carbon neutral by 2030.
2. Publicise climate emergency and promote a greater awareness of the truth of climate change amongst the local population.
3. Work with relevant experts in research and development to:
 - a. Review our current strategies and action plans for addressing climate change.
 - b. Identify any further policy changes or actions which we could undertake, within the scope of our powers and resources, to meet the challenge of climate emergency.
 - c. Seek the help of local partners and other research bodies to explain to the community work already underway and achievements already made, as well as targets for the future.
4. Update on further work undertaken by the Council in this area on an annual basis through the Council Annual Review of Performance Report section on corporate wellbeing objective - Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations.