

Motion: Climate Change

Proposer: Councillor Essex

Seconder: Councillor Booton

For Council to resolve:

There is a growing gap between the climate science and political commitments to deliver against those commitments by governments at all levels, such as reflected in the UK government's Climate Change Committee progress report to parliament (June 2023) and the UNFCCC report on National Climate Plans (November 2023). This gap is reflected in the need to deliver against climate targets by the UK government, as well as here in Reigate and Banstead.

One example of how government decisions affect carbon emissions locally is the Government's role to decide upon the national planning application for the Northern runway at Gatwick Airport, whose increase in carbon emissions far exceeds that within the borough of Reigate and Banstead.

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council is currently updating its Environmental Sustainability Strategy, produced in 2020.

All of the neighbour authorities to Reigate and Banstead (Croydon, Sutton, Tandridge, Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley and Crawley) and Surrey County Council have declared a Climate Emergency but this council still has not.

Surrey County Council produced its Climate Change Strategy in 2020 and is now designated as the lead local authority for action on climate change in Surrey.

The Climate and Ecology Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 10 May 2023. The Bill is backed by 180 cross-party MPs and Peers, 237 local councils including Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge, Mole Valley and Surrey Heath. The Climate and Ecology Bill would require the UK Government to develop and achieve a new environmental strategy, which would include:

- Delivering a joined-up environmental plan, as the crises in climate and nature are deeply intertwined, and require a plan that considers both together;
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with 1.5°C to ensure emissions are reduced in line with the best chance of meeting the UK's Paris Agreement obligations;
- Not only halting, but also reversing the decline in nature, setting nature measurably on the path to recovery by 2030;
- Taking responsibility for our overseas footprint, both emissions and ecological;
- Prioritising nature in decision-making, and ending fossil fuel production and imports as rapidly as possible;

- Providing for re-training for those people currently working in fossil fuel industries; and
- Giving the British people a say in finding a fair way forward via a temporary, independent and representative Climate & Nature Assembly, as part of creating consensus and ensuring that no one and no community is left behind.

Britain has a chance to be a world leader on climate and the environment; seizing the opportunities of the clean energy transition, including green jobs and skills; reduced energy bills, and boosting the UK's food and energy security.

References:

1. 2023 Progress Report to Parliament (CCC, June 2023)
<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/2023-progress-report-to-parliament/>
2. New Analysis of National Climate Plans: Insufficient Progress Made, COP28 Must Set Stage for Immediate Action (UNFCCC, 14 November 2023)
<https://unfccc.int/news/new-analysis-of-national-climate-plans-insufficient-progress-made-cop28-must-set-stage-for-immediate>
3. Environmental and Sustainability Strategy (Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, 2020) https://www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk/downloads/download/2064/environmental_sustainability_strategy_2020
4. Surrey Climate Change Strategy (Surrey County Council, 2020)
<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/community/climate-change/what-are-we-doing/climate-change-strategy/2020>

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Declare a Climate Emergency itself and reflect this in the update of its Environmental Sustainability Strategy.
2. Fully endorse the Surrey Climate Strategy and associated Local Transport Plan in its update of its own Environmental Sustainability Strategy
3. Join the 237 other councils who have resolved to support the Climate and Ecology Bill and write to the organisers of the cross-party campaign for this bill, expressing Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's support.
4. Write to the MPs with constituencies in our borough council area, informing them that this motion has been passed, and urging them to sign up to support the Climate and Ecology Bill.