

Bristol Greens declare climate emergency and bring city's CO2 emissions target forward 20 years



13 November 2018

A Green party motion calling on the Mayor of Bristol to declare a climate emergency and bring the city's carbon neutrality target forward by 20 years (to 2030) passed in a Full Council meeting this evening (Tuesday 13 November) with support from councillors of all parties, committing Bristol to the most ambitious climate change target out of all UK Core Cities.

The motion, submitted by Councillor Carla Denyer, was inspired by the recent IPCC report which warned that humanity has 12 years to take emergency action in order to prevent global warming greater than 1.5°C. Above this, the risks to humanity of floods, droughts, extreme heat and poverty become much greater, impacting on hundreds of millions more people.⁽²⁾ The motion text notes the progress already made by Bristol Council, and argues that as a former European Green Capital, Bristol has an important role to play in leading the UK in reducing carbon emissions as fast as possible. It asks the city's Mayor Marvin Rees to declare a Climate Emergency and pledge to make Bristol carbon neutral by 2030 (bringing forward the current target by 20 years), call on national government for more powers and resources to support this, work with partners in Bristol and other governments both in the UK and nationally to prevent climate change above 1.5°C, and to report back in six months on the actions that will be taken to address the emergency.

Councillor Denyer said:

"This is a fantastic day for Bristol and I'm delighted the Council will be bringing forward its target for carbon neutrality to 2030. The IPCC report made it clear that time to preserve Earth as we know it is running out. We can't wait for the UN or national governments to negotiate when we have just 12 years to act – we have to show how it's done and commit to ambitious action at the level of cities, which we did this evening.

"I'm grateful to my colleagues in the Green Group, who supported me in bringing this motion to council and leading the other political groups in the right direction, to those councillors from other parties who saw the importance of taking action, and to the public who did a fantastic job submitting statements and emailing their councillors in support of this motion. Thanks to all of you, Bristol is now leading the rest of the UK on climate change."

Councillor Steve Clarke, who seconded the motion, said he was overjoyed by the outcome and added:

“The next step is to ensure that this evening’s commitments are followed by ambitious action. Over the coming years, Greens will continue to hold Bristol Council to account on today’s decision, no matter what party is in power. We know that 2030 is a big commitment for the city and to meet this target an awareness of carbon emissions will have to factor into every decision the Council takes. We look forward to the Mayor reporting back to us in 6 months on what action he will take.”

Background:

Full text of the motion is attached [here](#). Actions that the Council could take might include involving carbon reduction in every decision the Council takes, stepping up the electrification of its vehicle fleet, requiring higher energy efficiency standards for new development, putting further work into reducing food waste across the city, working with city partners to encourage lower emissions and reviewing contradictions, for example the Mayor’s support for the expansion of Bristol Airport.

The IPCC report (available [here](#)) focusses on the impact that 1.5°C would have on the planet compared to 2°C. Some of the key findings were:

- Insects and plants were almost twice as likely to lose half their habitat at 2°C compared with 1.5°C warming
- Coral populations would be wiped out at 2°C warming but more than 10% would have a chance of surviving at the lower temperature
- Global fish stocks would lose 3 million tonnes at 2°C, twice the decline of 1.5°C, due to lower oxygen levels and greater acidity in the ocean
- Hundreds of millions more people, particularly in less developed countries, would be at risk of climate-related poverty with a 2°C increase
- The global population exposed to water stress would be 50% lower with 1.5°C warming
- At current levels, the world is on course for 3°C of warming

The motion was supported by Climate activists [Rising Up](#), who organised the prominent Extinction Rebellion protests in London and protested outside Bristol Council before the meeting.

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