

## **Motion submitted by Councillor Tierney concerning The Council's Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Policy**

1. The Earth's climate has always been changing. It is a natural process. Sometimes, natural events have caused the worldwide climate to change dramatically in a very short period of time.
2. There is reasonably strong evidence to say that the Earth's climate continues to change, but that at least some of that change is attributable to human activity.
3. All other things being equal, there is a strong scientific argument to suggest that rising levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere might increase global temperatures.
4. Excluding water vapour (which is the most prevalent naturally occurring greenhouse gas in our atmosphere) the most significant greenhouse gases affecting climate are Nitrous Oxide, Methane and Carbon Dioxide.
5. Over the last million years alone, polar ice samples demonstrate that concentrations of these greenhouse gases in Earth's atmosphere have, naturally and without any human cause, varied widely.
6. Nitrous Oxide has an atmospheric warming effect more than ten times as powerful as methane, whereas methane has itself over twenty times as powerful an atmospheric warming effect as Carbon Dioxide.
7. Nevertheless, when measuring both greenhouse gas emissions and the atmospheric warming effect, it is standard to do so in terms of the equivalent Carbon Dioxide effect of these other greenhouse gases (measurements are given by mass in "Carbon Dioxide equivalents" - CO<sub>2</sub>e).
8. The UK Government has committed to a net zero carbon (equivalent) emissions target by 2050.
9. The UK has cut its Carbon emissions by almost half over the past 30 years. The UK's share of global carbon emissions has already fallen to approximately 1% of world total emissions - the exact figure depends on exactly what you measure and how you measure it.
10. Regardless of that measurement issue, it is indisputable that, in the light of ever-increasing greenhouse gas emissions from China, India and many other smaller economies around the world, efforts in the UK to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will be insignificant and immaterial on a global scale given the increases expected in greenhouse gas emissions from other countries.
11. Even if we were to reduce that UK 1% share to 0%, it would make no discernable difference to global temperatures, particularly considering that emerging economies in Africa, India and China are going to be increasing their carbon emissions each year by more than our entire total.
12. The excessively rapid reduction in net UK carbon emissions to zero, argued for by some, could be seen as futile, virtue-signalling gesture politics which there is a good chance might lead to economic ruin for countless families, and ultimately for the country as a whole.

13. The cost to the UK of transitioning from less than 1% of global carbon emissions to net zero has been estimated to be £1trillion - a cost which the country and most families will be totally unable to afford, especially pointless when the actions of other countries make such an effort utterly futile. It is quite possible to suggest that this is a conservative estimate and that the actual costs, both direct and indirect, may be much higher.

14. Especially given our geography in Fenland, and our natural susceptibility to fluvial and tidal flooding, it would therefore make much more sense for us to advocate that a significant part of the UK's expense and effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should be redirected towards committing resources to adapting to future anticipated changes in climate rather than our adopting an unrealistic and idealistic view that what we in the UK do in respect of emissions will have any significant impact on future global climate change.

15. It is wholly unrealistic to expect that every country in the world is going to adopt those same economically destructive measures that some in this country would have us adopt at breakneck speed.

16. The current energy price increases being experienced by consumers and businesses will be insignificant compared to those cost increases that will come if we rush headlong into a net zero carbon economy. We cannot ignore the potential ruinous consequences of excessively rapid Net Zero policy proposals and we owe it to the people of Fenland not to do so unthinkingly

17. Sooner or later, and we hope sooner, the truth of the above statements will become clearer to more decision-makers in the UK.

18. In the meantime, many measures are being, and will be, proposed to reduce carbon emissions, and the availability of grant funding to local authorities may be impacted by a failure to show progress in reducing carbon emissions.

19. Just because a measure is taken primarily to reduce carbon emissions doesn't mean that it is a worthless measure. Many so-called carbon-reduction measures involve reducing waste, particularly wasted energy, and such measures are good in themselves if they are cost-effective. A good example of such a positive action was the replacement of the Leisure Centres' boilers with much more efficient and less wasteful systems. We should support all such measures that are economically beneficial for Fenland people as well as being beneficial in the fight for a greener set of climate policies.

#### COUNCIL THEREFORE RESOLVES:

a. to promote measures which alleviate the anticipated effects in Fenland of future global climate change, that are affordable and financially viable, and which we believe have a good chance of achieving their proposed end results.

b. to commit to meeting all climate change targets which are legally required by the UK Government.

c. to measure accumulatively the CO<sub>2</sub>e emission reductions achieved by the Council's actions, both through FDC's own activities and through the funding of schemes directed by or channelled via FDC to third parties in the District, using 2018 as the base year.