

SPEECH TO NHDC ENVIRONMENT PANEL

Good evening councillors and members of the public.

I speak on behalf of the **North Herts & Stevenage Climate Action Group**, a grass-roots organisation, set up to work closely with this Climate Emergency Panel.

We are an alliance of local people from different political parties and campaign groups, united by our collective concern at the rapidly developing global environmental crisis.

Despite all of the warm words from governments and business, global carbon emissions reached record levels in May 2019. If the upward trend is not quickly reversed, the consequences for human societies will be catastrophic; leaving no community unaffected. **We MUST ACT NOW. This means we MUST ACT NOW.**

We urge the council to do everything it can, to reduce the threat of catastrophic climate change and we are here to offer our help and support.

Recent evidence shows a wide-spread public growing concern about this issue, as does the fact that there are so many local residents here tonight.

Well done for adopting this scientifically backed climate emergency, however, none of us know what emergency actions you have taken since, as nothing has been reported. Where can we find your emergency action plan?

Work maybe taking place “behind the scenes” but whether this is the case or not, we urge you to move forward as rapidly as possible and we welcome the opportunity to work with you.

The motion you adopted, recognises that local authorities “are well placed to lead the world in reducing carbon emissions”. We agree.

The most immediate priority, as noted in the motion, is to review and update the Council's climate strategy, in support of the goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. The review should include a comprehensive audit of carbon emissions in the district, and should engage with local people. We believe the Council must be prepared to be radical, as the scale and urgency of the crisis demands.

There are many opportunities for reducing emissions and for increasing local climate change resilience. The Climate Action Group have invested a lot of time in putting together a list of actions as per the submissions under agenda item 4. The Council should consider adopting these actions as many of them have already been enacted by other UK authorities. These ideas have been circulated to panel members in advance of this meeting. The actions proposed cover all areas of the council's operations and remit, including planning, pollution, transport, housing, waste management, energy, local business and public engagement.

If you are in any doubt about the climate science, please accept Gilly Chegwyn's proposal to offer climate science talks freely as mentioned in my email. I'm happy to create a doodle poll for you and your officers to enable you to attend these talks to help you gain further clarity on the matter.

SUMMARY

Summing up, you have so much potential to do things differently from now, but you have a choice. NHDC can do things in the normal way and achieve relatively little relatively slowly. Or, driven by a committed Panel, it can go further and faster, supported by the community, to achieve something that the current residents of the district and future generations will remember and thank you for. If done well, you will inspire other authorities to step up their activities too, thus magnifying the impact of what we can achieve locally. We hope you will recognise the urgency whilst also seeing the potential for what *can* be done, and *choose this route*.

Thank you for listening.