

Dumfries and Galloway Council Climate Emergency Declaration 27 June 2019

## **DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY COUNCIL CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION**

With the inspirational and empowering words of 16 years old Greta Thunberg and the resulting School Strikes Movement now active across the world the impact of climate change has come into sharp focus and proven to be a global wake up call. Demands from our young people alongside the many voices from environmental groups are calling for governments across the world to make climate emergency declarations and many national governments, including in Scotland and the UK have now made that declaration. Scotland is already recognised as a leader in the pursuit of carbon reduction targets and much has already been achieved in sectors such as Energy, Waste, Agriculture, Residential and Transport. But there is now a requirement for urgent action to minimise a global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees and avert a catastrophic tipping point for the planet. The quality of life for future generations in our region will be defined by our actions and we as elected members of Dumfries and Galloway Council must demonstrate leadership and act upon our responsibilities by making our own Climate Emergency Declaration (CED).

The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction) (Scotland) Bill is making progress in the Scottish Parliament and will build significantly on the achievements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and direction from the UN Paris Agreement. Advice has also been taken in producing the Bill from the UK Climate Change Committee. Following the CED in April 2019 the Scottish Government has announced it will move faster and further on actions to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 and for Scotland to be carbon neutral by 2040. There is now a weight of expectation however that Dumfries and Galloway Council must take action with a strategic plan on tackling climate change. This motion therefore sets out our 12-point plan to reinvigorate the pursuit of net zero carbon emissions in our region, protect our fragile biodiversity and our natural environment. Dumfries and Galloway Council has previously implemented Carbon Management Plans 1 & 2 following the enactment of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, but to ensure an effective response to the climate emergency it is essential that we step up our actions significantly. We must embed throughout our entire organisational culture the pursuit of measures to tackle climate change. With our leadership and commitment Dumfries and Galloway Council will be in the vanguard of addressing climate change.

Dumfries and Galloway Council therefore agrees to make the following commitments which will be implemented following the establishment of a Climate Emergency Cross Party Working Group which will meet within 60 days and oversee implementation of our 12-point plan:

- 1. Dumfries and Galloway Council hereby declares a Climate Emergency and recognises the impact this will have on our quality of life. We recognise our responsibility to tackle climate change and fully commit to taking effective action to limit the impact on our region and its people;**
- 2. We recognise the challenges ahead to tackle climate change and, whilst we have already made significant strides towards achievement of a regional net zero carbon status, we will seek to achieve this outcome by the year 2025 and, wherever possible embrace opportunities to accelerate our target date;**

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- 3. We recognise our critical strategic leadership role to tackle climate change and will create a new and specific council priority from which our strategic objectives and outcomes will flow;**
- 4. We will urgently review all policy and practice across our council directorates and departments to identify ways in which we can move further and faster on carbon reduction measures;**
- 5. We will embed climate change considerations into all policy and practice risk assessments to ensure a continuous focus on the implications our actions may have on our environment, and ensure that measures to reduce or eliminate carbon emissions are acted on;**
- 6. We recognise the existing impact of the changing climate on the lives of local populations and will help them to make informed decisions on how to adapt to climate change; individuals, communities and businesses need a greater understanding of climate change and its impacts;**
- 7. We recognise the importance of our biodiversity and natural environment in our drive to reduce the impact of climate change and will encourage and support practices to enhance and sustain the farmed and natural world;**
- 8. We will embrace innovative measures and respond as a priority to technological advances which can reduce our region's impact on climate change. This will enable opportunities to contribute to the economic development and diversity of our region by supporting businesses and communities which can benefit from schemes and projects which support our priority to tackle climate change;**
- 9. We recognise that our pursuit of net zero carbon emissions is a challenge which all people who live and work in our region will share. Accordingly, we will establish a broad based and diverse Citizens' Panel, which will bring together representatives from across our region, harnessing the skills, experience and innovation our people possess to inform and influence the action we will take as a council;**
- 10. We will produce a Climate Change Strategic Action Plan which will incorporate our obligations under the Climate Change (Emission Reduction) (Scotland) Bill when enacted, encapsulate everything that we can do to reduce or eliminate carbon emission and, will incorporate actions on loss of biodiversity and our natural environment;**
- 11. We will commit to working closely with other local authorities, statutory agencies, public and private sector organisations and our communities to achieve carbon reduction outcomes and will seek to identify and share best practice;**
- 12. In recognition of Dumfries and Galloway Council's commitment to our Climate Change Declaration on eliminating carbon emissions, protecting our region's biodiversity and natural environment we will appoint an elected member as our Environment Champion.**

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With the magnitude of the task ahead, it is important to note that this declaration will represent a radical and comprehensive step change in Dumfries and Galloway Council's approach over the last decade to climate change. Consequently, a collegiate cross-party alliance is crucial, and indeed is the reasonable expectation of the communities we represent. We must therefore adopt an ethos that ensures in the years ahead that nothing should be off the table in our commitment to protecting quality of life for generations to come.