

REPORT OF THE PLACE AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 14 SEPTEMBER 2023

MOTION TO COUNCIL SEEKING SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSED CLIMATE AND ECOLOGY BILL

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Council support the proposed Climate and Ecology Bill in principle and;
- 1.2 That a Task and Finish Group be created to monitor the progress of the Climate and Ecology Bill through Parliament and explore the detail of the Bill.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 A motion seeking the Council's support for the proposed Climate and Ecology Bill (CE Bill) was presented to New Forest District Council on Monday 10th July 2023 – the motion and minutes of the meeting can be read [here](#), the motion can be seen at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The motion proposed that the Council:
 - i. Support the Climate and Ecology Bill;
 - ii. Inform local residents and local press/media of this decision;
 - iii. Write to MPs Sir Julian Lewis and Desmond Swayne to inform them that this motion has been passed, urging them to sign up to support the CE Bill, or thanking them for already doing so;
 - iv. Write to Zero Hour, the organisers of the cross-party campaign for the CE Bill, expressing its support (campaign@zerohour.uk).
- 2.3 It was resolved that the motion be referred to the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel for consideration, and to inform the decision.
- 2.4 The Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 14 September 2023 considered the motion presented by Cllr Osborne. The recommendations from the Panel are included in section 1 above and the comments from the Panel are in section 9 of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The proposed Climate and Ecology Bill can be read [here](#). It is a Private Members Bill reintroduced in the House of Commons by Olivia Blake MP (Labour, Sheffield Hallam) on 10 May 2023. The CE Bill is scheduled to have its second reading in parliament on 24 November 2023, however there are no guarantees that this proposed Bill advances in this parliamentary term.
- 3.2 Zero Hour have produced this [briefing paper](#) which provides their view of the key purposes, targets and benefits of the Climate and Ecology Bill. In general, it sets more inclusive and ambitious environmental targets to drive faster and more effective behaviour change, enabling the UK to meet its objectives around net zero carbon, climate change adaptation and nature recovery.
- 3.3 As noted in the motion at Appendix 1, the CE Bill is backed by 168 cross-party MPs and Peers, 237 local authorities, alongside the support of eminent scientists, such as

Sir David King; environmental NGOs, such as The Wildlife Trusts and CPRE; businesses, such as The Co-operative Bank; and 30,000 members of the public

- 3.4 If passed, the Government would be required to publish within 12 months a strategy to achieve the agreed objectives (Section 2 of the CE Bill sets out what will be included). Until such time that the strategy is drafted however, we do not know what impacts the proposed CE Bill will have at a local level or what it will achieve in practice (i.e. how actions will be implemented, enforced and monitored; when changes will take effect; what the costs will be; if this changes the physical and/or financial risk for the council).
- 3.5 NFDC declared a Climate Change and Nature Emergency in October 2021 and the principles of the CE Bill align with the operational and behavioural changes that we have committed to and are in the process of delivering through our Climate Change and Nature Emergency Action Plan.
- 3.6 The Resident Insight Survey carried out in early 2023 showed that three quarters of New Forest District residents feel worried about the impact of climate change (45% somewhat worried, 29% very worried). Supporting the Bill presents an opportunity for NFDC to demonstrate corporate leadership and respond visibly to the concerns of the public on these issues.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 No financial implications are associated with supporting or rejecting the motion. As outlined in 3.4, the potential financial implications of the CE Bill are unknown at this stage. It is not possible at this stage for the Council to clearly understand the financial implications of the Bill as proposed, and therefore there is some unquantifiable financial risk in the absence of clarity of how any additional burdens would be funded.

5. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No crime and disorder implications have been identified.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The main purpose of the Climate and Ecology Bill is to drive faster and more effective environmental improvements. Supporting the motion will not have direct environmental implications but could add weight to the endorsements of other local authorities and stakeholders identified in 3.3, showing sector support for the changes within the Bill.
- 6.2 As a local authority, NFDC is in a leadership position and is uniquely placed locally to influence residents, businesses and visitors. Supporting the motion demonstrates corporate social responsibility for environmental action; and conversely, rejecting the motion could discourage engagement in environmental activities.

7. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Climate change and environmental quality issues can affect everyone and in a variety of ways, but tend to have a greater impact on vulnerable citizens. Elderly and juvenile residents, those with health conditions, or those in any form of poverty (e.g. financial, food, energy) are less able to manage and adapt to extreme weather conditions and climate change impacts. These impacts could include extremes in temperatures, energy availability and cost, home adaptations, disease prevalence etc.
- 7.2 Taking quicker and more effective climate action could better support residents adversely affected by climate and environmental quality issues and reduce inequalities between groups of people.

7.3 Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) completed on 30 August 2023.

8. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

8.1 No data or privacy implications have been identified.

9. COMMENTS FROM PLACE & SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

- 9.1 A member raised concern on the practicality and the cost implications of supporting the Bill in its current form, given that it had not been approved by parliament nor had a strategy been finalised. It was suggested that a Task and Finish Group be created to monitor the progress of the Climate and Ecology Bill's progress through parliament and explore the detail of the Bill more closely.
- 9.2 A Panel member referenced the numerous natural disasters and severe weather that had been experienced around the globe. The unique natural makeup of the Forest meant that severe weather, similar to that experienced elsewhere in the world, would have major implications for the District. The member encouraged the Panel to work outside of the current consensus in order to aim for stricter environmental targets. The Panel member stated that practical strategies were needed at a national level and support for the motion would put pressure on the Government to improve their record on climate change.
- 9.3 With regards to biodiversity, a Panel member stated that UK flying insects had declined by 60% between 2004-2021, highlighting the impact to the country's ecosystem over the last 20 years.
- 9.4 Reference was made to the fact the Bill was awaiting its second reading in the House of Commons. A Panel member expressed reluctance to commit to the Bill whilst it is in this position of progress in Parliament. Further support for a Task and Finish Group to be created was given by the Panel member.
- 9.5 The Panel heard from one member that precipitation levels would increase 7% per year for every degree increase in global temperatures. Reference to the economy's reliance on the environment was given.
- 9.6 A Panel member explained that currently, in Parliament, 168 MPs support the Bill currently whilst 482 MPs do not.
- 9.7 The Panel reached an agreement to support the proposed Climate and Ecology Bill in principle as it progresses through Parliament and to recommend to Council that a Task and Finish Group be arranged to track the progress and explore the detail of the Bill.

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Background Papers:

[Climate and Ecology Bill](#)
[Zero Hour CE Bill Briefing Paper](#)

Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt in the UK, and around the world. The global temperature has already increased by 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels and—alongside this—the natural world has reached crisis point, with 28% of plants and animals threatened with extinction. In fact, the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world as more than one in seven of our plants and animals face extinction, and more than 40% are in decline.

Climate change remains a major concern for voters with 66% of people (according to YouGov) expressing they are ‘worried about climate change and its effects’. Alongside this, the popularity of Sir David Attenborough’s Save Our Wild Isles initiative demonstrates public concern that UK wildlife is being destroyed at terrifying speed.

Climate & Ecology Bill

The Climate & Ecology Bill, a private member’s bill currently before the House of Commons, seeks to address the challenges that this situation poses by creating a whole-of-government approach to deliver a net zero and nature positive future.

Based on the latest science, the Bill aims to align current UK environmental policy with the need to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, which was goal agreed to at COP15, via the Kunming-Montreal Framework (22 December 2022); and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with a fair share of the remaining global carbon budget to give the strongest chance of limiting global heating to 1.5C, which was the goal agreed to at COP21, via the Paris Agreement (12 December 2015).

By bridging the gap between the UK Government’s current delivery, and what has been agreed at international levels, Britain has a chance to be a world leader on the environment; seizing the opportunities of the clean energy transition, including green jobs and reduced energy bills; and boosting the UK’s food and energy security.

This Council notes that:

The Climate and Ecology Bill, which has been introduced in the UK Parliament on four occasions since 2020, including most recently in the House of Commons 10 May 2023. The Bill is backed by 168 cross-party MPs and Peers, 237 local authorities, alongside the support of eminent scientists, such as Sir David King; environmental NGOs, such as The Wildlife Trusts and CPRE; businesses, such as The Co-operative Bank; and 30,000 members of the public.

The Bill would require the UK Government to develop and deliver a new environmental strategy, which would include:

1. Delivering a joined-up environmental plan, as the crises in climate and nature are deeply intertwined, requiring a plan that considers both together;
2. Reducing emissions in line with 1.5°C, ensure emissions are reduced rapidly, for the best chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C;
3. Not only halting, but also reversing the decline in nature, setting nature measurably on the path to recovery by 2030;
4. Taking responsibility for our overseas footprint, both emissions and ecological;
5. Prioritising nature in decision-making, and ending fossil fuel production and imports as rapidly as possible;
6. Ensuring that no-one is left behind, by providing for retraining for people currently working in fossil fuel industries; and
7. Giving people a say in finding a fair way forward through an independent and temporary Climate & Nature Assembly, representative of the UK population, an

essential tool for bringing public opinion along with the unprecedented pace of change required.

8. This council has already passed a Climate and Nature Emergency motion and is now taking tackling climate change locally as an important strand of its strategy going forward. Therefore supporting the bill is aligned with local, national and international recognition we must act decisively and timely to deal with the climate crisis.

New Forest District Council therefore resolves to:

1. Support the Climate and Ecology Bill;
2. Inform local residents, and local press/media of this decision;
3. Write to MP's Sir Julian Lewis and Desmond Swayne to inform them that this motion has been passed, urging them to sign up to support the CE Bill, or thanking them for already doing so;
4. Write to Zero Hour, the organisers of the cross-party campaign for the CE Bill, expressing its support (campaign@zerohour.uk)."