

Notes of Informal Meeting of Climate Emergency Committee 12 October 2020

Present: Cllr R Coleman-Taylor (Chair and Mayor) Cllr M Taylor, Cllr R Williams, Cllr T Roberts and Cllr P Ripley

Apologies Received: The Revd G Kent

Other Members Present:

Guests: Mr Anthony Rae, Friends of the Earth (FOE) and Ms Catherine Benn, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)

Support Staff: Nicola Pugh (facilitator)

Cllr R Coleman-Taylor welcomed Mr Rae and explained that members are particularly interested in things that TTC can do for the benefit of the residents of Todmorden.

Presentation from Anthony Rae, Friends of the Earth

Mr Rae explained that he works as a volunteer and he coordinates the local group of FOE. He works at various levels including at the national level with the organisation 'Cutting Carbon Now' which aims to make rapid local change towards reducing carbon emissions. He also works at the pan-Northern level with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) Leeds City region Calderdale Climate Emergency Committee and Hebden Royd Climate Emergency Committee (chaired by Nikki Harvey). He has input, from the climate change perspective, into Hebden Royd's Neighbourhood Plan.

Mr Rae said that the first key point he wanted to make was that of the importance of making links between groups/activity at local, national and international levels to inform and achieve local action. He said that it was impossible to solve problems on our own locally. We could liaise with Calderdale MBC and then Calderdale could liaise with central government. Jez Tweed (principal officer regarding climate change) and Samantha Saxby are the key links at Calderdale.

He said that the second key point relates to the importance of knowledge. He reported that WYCA published its Carbon Reduction Pathways Study in July 2020 which stated that even with the most aggressive approach it would be 20% short of achieving a carbon neutral status in the area by 2038 (which has been agreed as a target by WYCA and Calderdale MBC). He stated that the government's own target for carbon neutral status is 2050 though WYCA and Calderdale wanted to achieve this by 2038.

Action Mr Rae said that he would forward the twenty-page summary of the (200 page) study to members.

Mr Rae said that Calderdale is in the last stages of producing the 2019-2032 Local Plan and is currently undergoing public consultations. He said that FOE has informed Calderdale that

the Local Plan is insufficient to enable Calderdale to achieve a carbon neutral status by 2038.

Mr Rae said that Hebden Royd had goals in its action plan including working with partners to:

- Ensure that the energy used in its public buildings are as carbon neutral as possible, educating and encouraging residents and businesses to do consider this also.
- To make green choices,
- To work with young people to encourage them to take opportunities to engage with nature and to encourage schools to reduce their carbon emissions,
- To work with the Upper Valley Councils on the issue of peatlands/uplands – in particular, there is substantial funding available for this.

Mr Rae said that climate change is a complicated issue and that campaigning at a local level is insufficient to make a difference. Instead of local campaigning they focus on knowledge gained from international and national groups and feeding this through into local policy making. He said that the local FOE participates in local initiatives such as being part of the Hebden Royd and Calderdale Climate Emergency Committees. Also, they aim to help to build resilience through organisations such as Tree Responsibility and Slow the Flow. Mr Rae said that FOE is also involved with the Flood Board.

Mr Rae confirmed that it is worthwhile, in his opinion, for TTC to undertake activities such as mapping with Slow the Flow to ameliorate local flooding. He said that there is a clear link between flooding and climate change. The health of the peatlands/uplands is vital in their role in storing carbon. Work could include carbon sequencing and planting peat bogs and trees.

Mr Rae said that Calderdale had published its 2018 figures for carbon emission in July 2020. This was 1 million tonnes. He said that it would be possible to find out the Todmorden proportion of this by looking at the population of Calderdale and Todmorden.

Cllr R Coleman-Taylor thanked Mr Rae for his very useful and informative presentation and confirmed that it would be helpful for TTC to have a clear understanding of the current levels of carbon emission.

Presentation by Catherine Benn – Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)

Cllr R Coleman-Taylor welcomed Ms C Benn to the meeting and said that members would be very interested to hear what the CND are doing locally regarding the climate emergency.

Ms Benn said that the Calderdale CND for the Calder Valley for Peace and Justice was set up in 2015 to campaign against the renewal of Trident. Although that campaign was unsuccessful, the group had made useful links and their goal was to keep the issue of nuclear weapons in the public awareness. She said that an early group of the local CND had been involved in setting up the Peace Garden in Todmorden in the 1980's.

Ms Benn went through a selection of slides and explained that the CND believe that spending vast amounts of money on nuclear weapons is wasteful and unethical. They are designed to kill civilians and as such using them should be regarded as a war crime. She pointed out that even if the nuclear weapons are not used, they can be the subject of accidents/incidents. She explained that the CND believe that nuclear weapons do not protect people from threats such as terrorism. She said that climate change is a great threat which potentially increases the risk of warfare as they both put pressure on resources. She explained that the Doomsday Clock has been moved to 100 seconds from potential Armageddon (because of the threat of climate change and military action using nuclear weapons) and that this is the closest it has been since this has been a concept.

Ms Benn said that the agreement of TTC to support the Treaty would be an important step forward. Cllr R Coleman-Taylor said that motion about the Treaty would be discussed at the Council Meeting on 14 October. She said that the members of the Climate Emergency Committee supported the motion and that many others on the Council would too.

Cllr Coleman-Taylor said that she would be grateful if Ms Benn could let members know of the other town/parish councils that have supported the Treaty and of any other actions they are taking. Ms Benn said that Blackshaw Head Parish Council and Hebden Royd Town Councils had already signed up and that Hepstonstall Parish Council were in the process of consideration.

Cllr Coleman-Taylor said that TTC could inform residents about the link between climate change and nuclear weapons on its website. Ms Benn enquired whether there would be a specific climate change section on the website.

Ms Benn said that she expected the Treaty to come into force at the end of 2020/early 2021 and she asked that TTC write to central government at that stage to increase the pressure at that point.

Cllr R Coleman-Taylor thanked Ms Benn for her useful presentation.

Notes of General Discussion

Cllr R Coleman-Taylor said that TTC had a role in informing people about climate change but that the specifics of arguing the existential threat caused by nuclear weapons is the role of CND.

Cllr M Taylor said that 2020 had been the first year that more than half of energy came from renewable sources. Nuclear power was a major source of energy which is low carbon but which causes other potential threats.

Cllr R Coleman-Taylor said that government support for solar power for homes and businesses is back on the agenda and that this is something TTC could increase awareness off on its website.

Cllr Coleman-Taylor said that the next two informal meetings of the Climate Emergency Committee would feature presentations from other organisations.

Cllr J Williams said that it would be very useful to start working with Slow the Flow to start the mapping process over the Winter.

There was some discussion about how to calculate Todmorden's carbon emissions – it was calculated that as there were 1,5481 residents in Todmorden and 20,0842 in Calderdale as a whole that Todmorden amounted to 7.4% of the population and therefore the carbon emissions were 74,000 tonnes in 2018. It was thought that this could be reduced somewhat as there is little industry in Todmorden.