

P-05-869 Declare a Climate Emergency and fit all policies with zero-carbon targets, Correspondence – Petitioner to committee 30.04.19

Extinction Rebellion Cymru response to the letter dated 19 February 2019 from Lesley Griffith AM, regarding the Welsh Government's response to our petition: Declare a Climate Emergency.

Much has changed in the short time since our petition was launched in February 2019, including heightened awareness of the Biodiversity crisis, school climate strikes, mass climate change protests globally and the Welsh Government declaring a Climate Emergency.

We would like to congratulate the Welsh Government for making Wales the first country in the world to take such an important step. Now we need to work together to develop the actions that reflect the reality of our situation.

In light of these changes, the Environment (Wales) Act target of an 80% reduction of carbon emissions by 2050, is inadequate. Over 5,000 Welsh citizens have signed a petition to declare a Climate Emergency and insist that the Welsh Government fits all policies with zero-carbon targets.

On Thursday 2 May 2019, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) will provide new advice to the UK Government, and is likely to recommend tightening the UK's long-term target, from 80% greenhouse gas reductions to net-zero by 2050. Again, a woefully inadequate target given the climate crisis we face.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC's) warns that we have only 12 years to cut CO2 emissions by half globally to prevent unstoppable runaway climate change (through feedback loops that become increasingly likely as the world heats up). All possible means must be employed to avoid irreversible climate change and ecological system breakdown.

The Welsh Government response to date, while encouraging, fails to reflect the scale of the existential crisis we all face. Any lack of ambition and urgency is dangerous.

We demand new, rational targets that commit Wales to limiting global warming to the IPCC's target of no more than 1.5 degrees centigrade. There is growing evidence that climate change is happening much quicker than originally predicted. The people of Wales need a level of response that reflects the evidence and the groundswell of opinion that supports bold, well-funded and accountable actions.

We welcome the Welsh Government's declaration of a Climate Emergency. It is crucial that this be followed up by details of your vision for a carbon neutral Wales. There must be detailed action plans and timeframes for the transition to this goal. Who will be responsible and how will they be held accountable?

We want to be involved as Welsh citizens, to scrutinize and support radical policies that are inclusive and resilient.

We are facing multiple converging crises with those least able to cope facing the worst impact: sea level rises; desertification; wildfires; water shortage; crop failure; extreme weather; loss of biodiversity; ecosystem disruption; millions of people displaced; disease; increased risk of wars and conflicts.

The recent horrific flooding in Mozambique is a humanitarian emergency happening now, made far worse by climate change. 1.85 million people are currently in need of

urgent humanitarian assistance, 70,000 people have been displaced from their homes and 600 people have died.

Lesley Griffiths' letter correctly states that Welsh policy must be evidence-based. The evidence from the world's scientists is that unprecedented urgency and commitment is required to avoid a disastrous future, as highlighted so effectively by David Attenborough and Greta Thunberg.

The report by the Intergovernmental Panel for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) due to be published on 6 May 2019 will highlight the threat to humans if the devastation of nature continues. We do not have the time to react incrementally, we are in a Climate Emergency, this requires much more proactive and robust action.

The biodiversity crisis in Wales was eloquently voiced by Iolo Williams in the program 'Saving the Land of the Wild', citing a 98% loss of hay meadows, 80% decline in curlew numbers, devastation of lapwing, yellowhammer and water vole populations (to name just a few).

In Wales, historically we have had a fossil fuel economy based on coal that collapsed under the pressures of globalisation. Those mining communities were betrayed, abandoned, and impoverished. When our current fossil fuel based lifestyle collapses we run the risk of similar or worse societal collapse. No one will escape the effects of climate change, however the poorest and most vulnerable in our society will be the first to suffer the impacts. So this time we must beat the arc of history and seize the opportunity to develop a new economy that is not reliant on fossil fuels.

We need the Welsh Government to ensure a globally responsible Wales, playing our full part in reducing global emissions that are impacting those in countries least to blame for this Climate Emergency.

We need the Welsh Government to ensure that climate adaptation creates resilient and inclusive communities across Wales. We want our government to grasp the opportunity to invest in a green economy that includes people and distributes resources more fairly.

Citizens' Assemblies

Wales already leads the way in the world with the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the One Planet Development policy. 'What Wales is doing today the world will do tomorrow' – United Nations. We are proud to live in a county with a Youth Parliament and would like to extend that to include Citizens' Assemblies to help support and scrutinise the transition to a carbon-neutral Wales. This link explains how Citizens Assemblies work: <https://sharedfuturecic.org.uk/citizens-assemblies-citizens-juries-and-climate-change/>

It is crucial that Citizens Assemblies have the political backing and resources needed to ensure equal and fair process. Expert witnesses explain difficult issues to Citizens' Assemblies with time taken to develop understanding and skills in consensus process. Globally there have been a number of examples of Citizens' Assemblies making a valuable contribution to resolving complex issues facing democracies; cutting through conflicts of interest and supporting politicians to make decisions for the long-term good of all.

We want you to develop Citizens Assemblies' operating across Wales and in the heart of government, making their decisions binding and at the same time helping to restore faith in politics.

Popular Support

The groundswell of support for recent climate change protests in London is evident in Wales. A large cross-section of people supported our three day cycling action in Cardiff last week. For many it was their first engagement with environmental activism. People have voiced their increasing frustration with what looks, at best, like an inadequate government response to the situation. Across Wales, the UK and the world there is a tide of concern and anger at the perceived inaction by politicians in the face of the Climate Emergency. This is what is drawing people onto the streets, including the regular school climate strikes. People, of all ages want to engage in meaningful action.

The Extinction Rebellion movement in Wales will continue to grow to become a movement that brings together the issues of social and environmental justice, acknowledging the intersections and collaborating with the rich network of similar groups across Wales.

Together we, the people of Wales, will hold the Welsh Government to account, and we will support policies and actions that deliver radical change.

Our demands

1. Declare a Climate Emergency.
2. Ensure all current and future policies are consistent with averting further climate change and ecological collapse.
3. Enact legally binding policy measures to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2025 and to reduce consumption levels.
4. Implement a Citizen's Assembly of Wales to oversee the change

The people of Wales are depending on you to rise to this challenge. The time to act is now.