

18th NOVEMBER 2019

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY

Purpose of Report

This report proposes that the MCA to declare a 'Climate and Environmental Emergency.'

Thematic Priority

This report relates to the following Strategic Economic Plan priorities:

- Secure investment in infrastructure where it will do most to support growth.
- Facilitate and proactively support growth amongst existing firms.

Freedom of Information

The paper will be available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme.

Recommendations

Members of the MCA are asked to:

- declare a 'Climate and Environmental Emergency.'
- request that a report be provided at the next meeting setting out, in further detail, the development of a plan for delivering a sustainable City Region, produced in collaboration with both universities, alongside a draft Energy Strategy.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The science of global warming is now undisputed in all credible circles, as is the recognition that action is needed immediately for fundamental change. Fundamental change will require strong leadership and the support of the whole of the public sector, including combined authorities and local authorities, but will also require buy-in and action by private sector businesses, households and individuals.
- 1.2** There are increasingly urgent calls internationally, nationally and locally to address the impacts of climate change, including setting ambitious CO₂ emission reduction targets. In May 2019 the Committee on Climate Change published a report which recommended that the UK legislate to become a net-zero carbon economy no later than 2050. An amendment to the 2008 Climate Change Act became law on 27th June 2019 making the UK the first 'major economy' to legislate for net zero. Almost 200 Local Authorities have declared climate emergencies including Sheffield, Barnsley and Doncaster.
- 1.3** This report provides the context in support of a Climate and Environmental Emergency Declaration by the MCA Group.

2. Proposal and Justification

- 2.1** The catalyst for calls to declare a Climate Emergency was the 2016 Paris Agreement which set out the need to keep global temperature rise well below 2°C, but with an ambition to curtail the rise to 1.5°C. However, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a Special Report on Global Warming in October 2018, which reported that *'Human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels, with a likely range of 0.8°C to 1.2°C. Global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate.'* Some of the impacts of this temperature increase will be long-lasting or irreversible, such as the loss of some ecosystems.
- 2.2** Meeting the Climate and Environmental Emergency challenge requires collective action from across all public, private and voluntary sectors, as well as individuals, and will require us all to change the way we live, work and travel. There is a need for immediate action coupled with the need for long term strategic planning and delivery. The MCA, in liaison with the LEP and SYPTE, have an opportunity to join our local authorities in providing leadership in the SCR in tackling climate change.
- 2.3** We are already prioritising projects that complement the move to a net zero carbon society such as:
- **Bus improvements are a priority.** A review of South Yorkshire bus services is currently underway. Over 7,000 people have responded to the bus survey.
 - The **Active Travel agenda** which is encouraging people to switch from private vehicles to public transport and walking/cycling. This includes the appointment of Dame Sarah Storey as the SCR Active Travel Commissioner.
 - **Transport investment** - around 50% of our £220m Transforming Cities Fund proposal will be to fund cycling and walking infrastructure as well as a programme of works to support continuation of our zero-emission Supertram network.
 - The Mayor's commitment to the **Northern Forest** initiative including the recent letter to the Prime Minister co-signed by Northern Leaders to request further investment.
 - The Mayor's focus on **tackling fuel poverty** including speaking at the recent National Energy Action Annual Conference in Sheffield.
 - Supporting **low carbon innovation and business growth opportunities** such as the expansion of ITM's hydrogen fuel facilities and the £22m new research centre for Fusion technologies at the AMP.
 - Installing solar panels and renewable source heating within the MCA Group estate and electric vehicle charging points at, for example, Rotherham Interchange.
- 2.4** However, declaring a Climate and Environmental Emergency means that full consideration will need to be given to decisions around all areas of strategic policy and investment and how these align with the strategy to achieve a net zero carbon city region. Significant changes will be required both in how the MCA, LEP and SYPTE operate, and in our role of setting strategic policy, developing programmes, and the approach to investment and support.
- 2.5** A new Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) for the region is currently under development, and there is a clear steer from public and private sector leadership that the region's plans should aim for not only inclusive but also sustainable growth. Economic growth 'at any cost' is not an option, however there is a real opportunity for SCR to have 'first mover advantage' and position itself as a leader in sustainability-driven innovation in order to set out a credible and deliverable plan to respond to any Climate Emergency declaration.
- 2.6** We are uniquely placed to do this thanks to the world-leading expertise of researchers at the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University, their experience in delivering such projects and access to significant funding, facilities and equipment. This is combined with the significant work already underway to produce an SCR Energy Strategy.

2.7 Developing a systemic response to the Climate Emergency declaration, which capitalises on the technological and scientific capabilities within the region, will bring economic growth which is both inclusive and provides the necessary social and environmental benefits. It is therefore proposed that the SCR Executive Team finalise the Energy Strategy, but also work closely with both universities to set out a much broader plan by March 2020 through which a range of possible development solutions to meet our declaration commitments which can be tested and implemented. This will form a key tenant of the refreshed SEP.

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

3.1 The negative impacts of climate and environmental change are evident in the UK and throughout the world, such as more extreme weather conditions, increasing flooding, loss of habitats and species, and acceleration in the melting of polar ice caps and glaciers. Carbon emissions are proven to be the key cause of these changes and this must be where action at all levels needs to be focussed.

3.2 A do-nothing or do-minimal approach will simply continue this negative trajectory which will have catastrophic effects for all of us. Changes will require national and international efforts, but there are also measures that are best implemented at the SCR level and locally.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

There will be a resource implication associated with changes in strengthening how clean growth and climate change impacts are considered as part of all new schemes that come through the Combined Authority. Additional resources will be needed to allow the MCA to deliver changes to its operations and internal policies which will need to be factored in to the MCAs business planning process for 2020/2021 and beyond. Although there may also be savings made and new revenue generating opportunities that may arise as measures are implemented.

4.2 Legal

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. However, the implication of declaring a Climate and Environmental Emergency has the consequence of affecting the way in which contracts will be entered in the future.

4.3 Risk Management

A risk assessment will be undertaken as part of the response plan proposed.

4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

None arising directly from this report. The detailed proposals to address the Climate Emergency will be inclusive through covering all the SCR, and the outcomes such as cleaner air, better health and wellbeing, more attractive urban and rural environments will be shared by all.

5. Communication

5.1 Proactive communications will be delivered across a range of channels, including digital, social and traditional media.

6. Appendices/Annexes

None

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ. Other sources and references: N/A