

Extinction Rebellion Chichester (XR Chichester) response to consultation on Chichester District Council (CDC) draft Climate Emergency Action Plan

1 November 2020

XR Chichester commends the CDC on having declared a climate emergency and on making progress developing an action plan which goes some way to responding to it. Importantly, the plan commits the CDC to both council operations *and* district-wide targets for carbon reduction. However, on the basis of the draft plan, we are unconvinced targets will be achieved, or indeed that they are sufficient to address the scale of the crisis. The following sets out our key concerns and recommendations:

i. Scope: The plan addresses the climate emergency but not the equally important/intricately related ecological emergency (beyond references to bio-diversity restoration projects). It also does not address, or even acknowledge, the pressing need to build community resilience to extreme temperatures, flooding, droughts and other negative impacts of climate breakdown. While other plans may address bio-diversity decline and resilience, an overarching framework, rather than a silo approach, that includes all relevant plans/strategies is essential for effective, joined-up policy and action.

ii. Vision and leadership: The plan lacks a vision or any clear commitment to leadership by the CDC. Although many elements of the district-wide targets are not within direct council control, it has a pivotal role in raising awareness, educating, inspiring, mobilising, coordinating and enabling others to act. As part of its leadership role, it is essential that the CDC does not wait on national policy developments to see what/whether actions are possible. Rather it should take the lead from other councils and commit to proactively lobby upwards (WSSC and government) for policy changes, funding streams and other measures needed to enable district-level carbon-reduction targets to be met.

iii. Decision making: We welcome the action to institute a system for identifying CDC decisions with impacts on GHG emissions. However, we believe there should be an explicit commitment to ensure that *all* strategic decisions, budgets and approaches to planning decisions are in line with ensuring the district does not exceed its carbon budget, with immediate effect.

iv. Climate justice: Climate change increases vulnerability to and is likely to compound poverty other forms of disadvantage. There is also evidence that some adaptation and mitigation policies can deepen inequity. Yet the plan makes no reference to ensuring socially just responses. We urge the CDC to explicitly commit to a fair, equitable and socially just plan, and ensure that actions target the most vulnerable and that their voices are represented in council decision-making and council-citizen deliberations.

iv. Targets: The 10 per cent year on year targets are a welcome start, as is the acknowledgment that these significantly under achieve the Tyndall Centre's carbon budget of 14% per year annual reduction in emissions in the district. However, we strongly disagree with the argument that targets should reflect what is possible rather than what is needed.

v. Sectors: A detailed breakdown of emissions per sector is needed to identify locally relevant goals and pathways to achieving them. This should include identification of obstacles including national policy or funding constraints that should feedback into upward pressure for change. All sectors need to reduce its emissions in line with the Tyndall carbon budget; no sector would be able to 'carry' the others.

For example, regarding **energy efficient homes**, based on Government data there are approximately 40,000 houses in the district on the gas network. If 70% replaced gas heating systems with ASHPs by 2025, the 14% annual reduction for this sector could be achieved. However, subsidies or other financial support would be needed to make this a reality. The CDC could also, for example, show real leadership by introducing higher than current national standards for privately built new homes.

On **renewable energy**, the SCATTER allocation of 752GWh renewable electricity generation is not based on the resources available in the district (excellent solar and good wind resources) which, with current technologies, would allow the entire district's energy demand to be met from renewable sources from within the district, if that demand is electrified.

Sector plans also need to be based on joined up thinking and an understanding of needs. For example, on **transport**, for example, the plan includes many different initiatives. These need to be brought together in a single framework with input from key stakeholders, and be based on understanding of transport needs and what currently prevents people from walking, cycling, using public transport etc. Council policies that are incompatible with carbon reduction targets, such as income generation from parking i.e. effectively encouraging use of private vehicles, need to be rethought and consideration given to innovative (and revenue generating) ideas such as workplace parking levies.

vi. Public/stakeholder engagement plans: We broadly support the proposed approaches, although with significant reservations. Most fundamentally, in the absence of a theory of change and a clear commitment to council leadership and coordination, it is unclear how the proposed elements either individually or collectively will contribute to achieving targets. Specifically:

- **Thematic working groups:** These have the potential to be really effective mechanisms for driving change, but to be so they need to be mandated and supported to design and implement strategies, plans and actions; their impact monitored; and sustainability ensured. Much greater clarity is needed on their relationship with the CDC, including how the CDC will support them, how WGs will contribute to shaping CDC policy and action, and whether WGs can implement actions without seeking council approval.
- **Behaviour change:** The proposed actions are based on false premises including that people change behaviour if told what to do, and that high-carbon lifestyles are always a matter of personal choice. To be successful the strategy must be based on understanding of why/what is preventing people from making low-carbon choices (this may be lack of awareness/information, but could also be financial or other practical constraints). It is also far more likely to be successful if it is designed around ideas and input from residents (think community shaping and co-creation of plans).
- **Citizen's Jury:** We welcome the inclusion of a CJ, but it should be a Citizen's Assembly to allow for the participation of a greater number, and far more representative section, of the population and thereby generate a broader range of responses and recommendations.

But the CDC needs to think beyond these apparently unrelated elements and adopt an approach of both stakeholder and public engagement that is on-going, mutually reinforcing and truly participatory. Other councils are already doing this through calls for evidence and ideas from the public, youth engagement events, thematic hearings, climate assemblies and other initiatives.

The task ahead is daunting, but it can and has to be done. We urge the CDC to demonstrate real leadership and adopt the radically participatory ways of working that are needed to achieve the change needed to meet the crisis we are facing. **Be ambitious, be creative, be bold!**