

Can the Green Phoenix Save Coventry?

What is the challenge

To respond to the UN 2030 Climate Emergency to contain rising global warming within 1.5 degrees as at the UN Paris Conference 2015. The solution offers the opportunity to accelerate the transformation to a low carbon clean green future for our city and world.

We are aware of the range of clean green energy technologies as well as wider economic, social and environmental solutions. We know from the 2008 Stern Review that it will cost far less if we act and invest now than deal with the consequences of delay, for which we see daily evidence. It also has the dual benefit of rapidly reducing carbon emission from fossil fuel power generation, petrol

and diesel for transport as well as gas, all of which damage our health and quality of life. Central to this green phoenix is addressing unjust wealth responsibility to help pay for this. The richest 10% are responsible for 50% of the world's carbon emissions, while the poorest 50% contribute 10%. Furthermore, locally and globally, the poor suffer the most, with less resources to adapt to the impacts.

It also requires a fundamental rebalancing of the unsustainable relationship between human society and nature, on which we are totally dependent but are constantly exploiting.



MAKING COVENTRY'S CLEAN GREEN FUTURE organised by Climate Change Solutions Ltd, provided a range of presentations showcasing existing and planned solutions from public, private and third sector

Colin Knight Director of Coventry City Transport highlighted a range of initiatives including an electric "Very Light Rail Self Propelled Tram" and innovative track system to operate from 2024. The city has the highest proportion of electric vehicle charge points and currently partners with Warwick Manufacturing Group in constructing the £110 million government-funded Battery Manufacturing and Research Centre by the airport. Modernising the Railway station and improved infrastructure for the new line from Kenilworth to Nuneaton including the Ricoh Arena. A major extension of cycle routes will encourage more to continue what is now a growth mobility experience.

Note: *MicroCab Ltd, exhibition stand showcased their hydrogen & fuel cell vehicles, first in the UK, produced in partnership with Coventry University and partly funded by European Horizon 2020.*

Cllr Jim O'Boyle Coventry Cabinet Member for Jobs & Regeneration and CWLEP board member,

highlighted a range of achievements including the planned low carbon project such as the heat line from the waste incinerator, increasing electric vehicle charging points, electric buses, making electric taxis, recycled road materials, new cycle lanes, a new £110 UK Battery Industrialisation and Research Centre, and also a Coventry & Warwickshire Green Business 50% EU-funded SME energy efficiency programme. A slide indicated how Coventry's carbon emissions have seen a major reduction since 2012. The Coventry Council in June 2019 "recognised there is a climate emergency and will be addressing this through a new climate change strategy and public consultation". Unfortunately, he concluded with a graph showing China as the current biggest carbon emitter and stated that "it doesn't matter what you all say or do here today it won't make any difference". This was the first public event on what Coventry can do on the Climate Emergency following Coventry Council's agreement four months before.

Darren Gardner E.ON UK Director of eMobility highlighted the need for vision, leadership and partnership. He also reported all their UK domestic customers now receive 100 renewable power including in Coventry. He highlighted that the directly elected Bristol Mayor initiated *Bristol Leap* model (population similar to Coventry & Warwickshire): a smart integrated low carbon partnership procurement programme for £ 1 billion leading to £5 billion investment under a Power Purchase Agreement capital investment to achieve Net Zero by 2030. Central to this is a comprehensive programme of public consultation and community/civic society engagement. Malmö in Swede (population like Coventry) also has a comprehensive integrated smart low carbon city partnership programme to achieve net zero by 2030 or before, with similar public consultation and community engagement.

He recommended Coventry to consider both models and suggested that E.ON would be willing to share this experience with the city council. E.ON UK has disinvested from all coal, gas and nuclear power generation and has its HQ in Coventry.

Note: Darren Gardner was a former council officer and initiated the *Renewable Energy and Energy Technology Alliance (RETA)*.

Susan Juned Director of the Heart of England Community Energy: 60,000 solar panels near Stratford upon Avon generating the equivalent to supply 4,500 home with green power. Community owned and benefits local and international charities by donating £30,000 annually, with £20,000 to Act on Energy addressing households in fuel poverty who often experience bad health and unhealthy accommodation. The HECE service provider is Community for Renewables managing a widest network of *community* energy projects with HECE being the largest.

Tom Bradley External Affairs Manager Cadent Ltd. Gas grid company presented on the North West, Yorkshire, Scotland and Keel University local government and business consortiums. Carbon capture and storage technology will also be used to process gas so produce green hydrogen. Gas is used for spacial heating, cooking, hot water. Industry accounts for 1/3 of UK carbon emissions. Ultimately, it is envisaged to use the gas grid to deliver hydrogen to local fuel stations supplying hydrogen & fuel cell vehicles (and trains) which will only emit clean drinkable water vapour.

Note: before the North Sea gas we had processed coal gas which contained around 10% hydrogen. Cadent have offices and depot in Coventry.



Dr Nadia Inglis Public Health Consultant, Health Protection Coventry & Warwickshire showed the relation of local carbon emissions is damaging to citizens health particularly the very young and elderly. Other health conditions can be further exacerbated affecting virtually every organ in the body. This is more apparent for those in poverty and in bad housing conditions, resulting in the NHS bearing greater cost for treatment when they return to the unhealthy environment. All this has subsequently been highlighted with the Covid-19 epidemic and lockdown and the unsustainable adverse relationship to the natural world requiring a holistic integrated societal approach to effect a speedier transition to a sustainable fairer, clean, green society.

Jane Nellist President of Coventry Trade Union Council & National Education Union Member highlighted the UK Trade Union Council including the NEU and commitment to work with the CBI, local government and other organisations commitment to action on the UN 2030 Climate Emergency. There is a need to grasp the green energy technology manufacturing industry while also retrofitting homes and buildings to lower carbon consumption. This helps create a million and more socially and environmentally friendly unionised jobs, not zero-hour contract locked into insecurity and poverty. We need green affordable public transport systems, including making electric, hydrogen & fuel cell as well as hybrid vehicles more affordable.

opportunity for the arms manufacturing industry and prioritise environmental and socially useful products and services. We should be able to make more of the green technologies and not just rely on imported solar panels, wind turbines, etc.

Chair: Tony McNally Managing Director Climate Change Ltd wound up with thanking both speakers, helpers and participants and urging all to work together for Coventry's contribution to the UN 2030 Climate Emergency 50% carbon reduction.



A **Coventry Green New Deal** workshop was held after lunch which was initiated by several local groups and some city councillors convened by David Ridley and Chris Jones. It had six round table themed discussion groups and a joint report. A steering group structured this into a set of priority aims and objectives by drawing on the positive outcomes from the morning's presentations and discussion. This subsequently produces the Coventry Green New Deal Manifesto which the Labour Group has told its councillors not to support.

Coventry & Warwickshire Climate Action Partnership was formed from Coventry City Council Climate Team convened meeting (4/12/2019) with 30 local organisations and several staff to produce an agreed joint community led project bid to the National Lottery Climate Action Fund for £200 k (unsuccessful first round). The core project consisted of:

- Creating a poster (A1) exhibition illustrating the science of the 2030 Climate Emergency along with a range of international and local solutions and what citizens, public, private and community organisations can do to contribute (see below)
- Seeking agreement for vacant shops or other windows to be used to showcase the posters to inform, inspire and engage the public etc. It can increase footfall, make it more attractive and help support surviving traders as a street gallery.
- Establishing one of the vacant shops as a

Climate Action Community Hub, a one-stop shop offering face to face advice and signposting to relevant organisations

- Establishing one of the vacant shops as a Climate Action Community Hub, a one-stop shop offering face to face advice and signposting to relevant supportive organisation.
- Planning an outreach programme with some relevant exhibition posters along with speakers to schools and community organisations

An initial steering group was appointed to finalise the bid which was submitted 18/12/2019 on behalf of the CWCAP by Tony McNally, Managing Director Climate Change Solutions Ltd. We were informed in March 2020 ours was one of 630 unsuccessful in the first round. It was previously agreed to seek other means to progress the project in such a scenario and resubmit for the next round. A partners meeting was called to progress this 18/3/2020 hosted at the Council House but was cancelled due to the lockdown. But a group of University of Warwick Global Sustainable Development students are working on poster designs along with others. Next term, we expect to have more Coventry University graphic art students working on this while efforts are made to seek other funding support. Every school and college student could be encouraged to produce posters that could be displayed from their windows, similar to those seen on home and other buildings with messages regarding tackling COVID-19. Perhaps all could establish a Climate Emergency Student Council to progress this.



COULD COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL?

- Prioritise making the UN 2030 Climate Emergency 50% carbon reduction central to a comprehensive clean green recovery action programme including the above.
- Recognising its reduced staff and other resources, it needs to engage more as an enabler and partner with our modern diverse civil society, *not business as usual*, for success.
- Could it evidence its real carbon footprint as importing about £1 billion per year of mainly carbon-based power, gas and transport fuel. To include the embodied carbon associated with the numerous new building over the decade.
- How much renewable energy is being generated and from what source? What is projected for achieving at least 50% by 2030 in line with the UN 2030 Climate Emergency?
- To organise a virtual *Citizens Assembly* on both the ways and means to low carbon retrofit homes and other building considering the government's White Paper. And a second assembly on achieving net zero sustainable homes and communities supporting UK Green Building Council guidelines. This could include seeking to convert IKEA and other vacant commercial building in the city centre into homes for those most in need. Friargate site should be rescheduled for homes not more commercial offices given the new circumstances.



Summary:

Since the UN Earth Summit 1992 Rio Brazil 192 countries signed an Agenda21 agreement including initiating the Kyoto Protocol on climate change (which I contributed to) there's been insufficient progress on delivering agreement. Now we have a decade to avert irreversible catastrophe. It requires national and local, public and private as well as NGO working together on the scale of response to the coronavirus.

The good news is the clean energy technology revolution is growing as the polluting carbon is declining as seen by the decisions of BP, Shell, coal production and others in decline.

We see the prospect of a new USA President plans for a \$2 trillion Green New Deal investment to be matched by the EU Green New Deal while China has the fastest growth in the world in the major clean energy technologies. Yes, Coventry's *Green Phoenix* can rise again to help make our Future.

Tony McNally

Managing Director Climate Change Solutions Ltd

tony@climate-change-solutions.co.uk
www.climate-change-solutions.co.uk

024 76 675444

The TechnoCentre
 Coventry University Techno
 Puma Way
 Coventry CV1 2TT

