

Climate Emergency raised at council meeting today

There was a deputation of several organisations who are worried about climate change this morning at the full council meeting. These groups include Extinction Rebellion, Transition Edinburgh and Youth Strike 4 Climate who were represented by Esther Silverton (14), Natalie Taylor and Mike Wignall .

They demand that the council responds to the Environmental and Climate Emergency declaring a 2030 Climate Neutral target. This urges full involvement of young people, the wider business and financial and public sectors as well as other civil society organisations.

They were protesting outside the City Chambers as councillors arrived.



Natalie Taylor from Extinction Rebellion said : “I believe that the severity of the situation in which we now find ourselves calls for an entirely new approach. Just the other day I learned that the Arctic stronghold of the Global Seed Vault was flooded after permafrost melted. I am appealing for help to my ward councillors and all of you as elected representatives on the council.”

Mike Wignall of Transition Edinburgh said : “I am heartened to read in the Sustainability Approach that the council along with your partners will take a ‘mission-oriented approach’ focuses on the shared challenge. We strongly support this approach and believed the only effective way forward is through collaboration on an unprecedented scale.”

Esther Silverton said : “We have made many wrong decisions and now is the time to make the change to make the world perfect for others. We will not accept empty words. We need to make the changes now. Humans are masters at adaptation and change but we are creatures of habit too. This is our one chance. We will keep the pressure up and we won’t stop until our voices are listened to.”

Councillor Cammy Day the Deputy Leader said : “I don’t think any of us here disagree with anything you say. The question

for you is that the legislative power to do all of this does not lie in this chamber. Will you work with us to try and change the law in this regard?"

Cllr Steve Burgess criticised the Council Leader for adopting a piecemeal approach to this problem. He asked how urgent the campaigners thought it was to get working on this huge challenge. Mike replied : "Governance is crucial. What I saw in one day in Manchester was a great example of leadership when the mayor brought together leaders who could share the problem."

Natalie replied that she is delighted with the way Edinburgh has reacted to the Climate Emergency, but that the longer the wait the higher the sea levels and the more species which will be lost. Esther replied that young people can make changes to their behaviour now. She continued : "It is essential as it will affect everyone here no matter how old they are. We have to start now."

Cllr Cameron Rose asked the deputation (to boos from the other councillors) : "I recognise there are climate risks but I am none of the people along with many well qualified scientist that the doomsday predictions are not borne out by the science."

Natalie replied to him : "The IPCC report supported by many scientists suggests that we are in multiple dangers. We do not need to talk about this any more – the evidence is everywhere. I would much rather not break the law. I would rather talk like this today. If we can create systems for talking openly and truthfully there will be a better outcome."

Cllr Cameron asked about whether representations are being made to other levels of government. Natalie replied there was much work to be done to bring this to the fore with government, and that she would love to make a deputation to the Scottish Parliament. In terms of Scotland's leadership as

a nation we can show others like the US that there is a sustainable way forward. She said : "This is not just about fuel but also about personal choices such as vegetarianism."

Esther admitted the difficulties : "It is hard to cut down on plastic and fuel, but it must be done. We are only imperfect individuals doing their best."

Cllr Nick Cook said that the Tories had passed an ambitious Climate Change paper in 2017 which he hoped the deputation had read. (He offered to email them a copy). He then criticised the record of the SNP government on meeting targets like recycling etc. He asked if they had spoken to any MSPs. Mike admitted that he was not aware that anyone from Transition Edinburgh had.

Cllr Neil Gardiner the Planning Convener reminded the deputation about the dialogue around the [City Plan 2030](#) which will be published later this year and a consultation period will then follow.

Cllr Scott Arthur suggested the campaigners lobby for the legislation that the council needs in relation to reducing carbon emission. He also mentioned the tourism economy in Edinburgh which has a huge environmental impact on the capital. The campaigners replied suggesting that air passengers have an impact and that they welcomed the government's recent decision not to cut Air Departure Tax.



Esther Silverton (14), Mike Wignall and *Natalie Taylor*