

## Statement to the 21.5.18 meeting of B&NES Council CTE Panel

Thank you chair.

For me, both as a strategist, economist and policy professional, and as a B&NES resident, **the most important date on my horizon is around<sup>1</sup> the middle of this century, when the door closes on humanity's opportunity to avert catastrophic climate change.**

So, after having sat through much of this month's full Council meeting, when it seemed the only date on councillors' horizon is May 2019, I was absolutely delighted to discover the B&NES Environmental Sustainability Partnership's Vision Statement on your agenda today.

In particular, I was:

- Encouraged by its underpinning strategic vision, partnership working, and cross party commitment;
- Gratified to see the progress made since the 2009 scrutiny inquiry calling on the Council to catalyse bold, purposeful and collaborative action on this agenda;
- Impressed by the range of initiatives to progress the agenda (not least the B&NES Water Space initiative, which is exemplary in its recognition of the many interdependent causes, impacts, and local perspectives critical to managing our environment effectively).

With the raft of national legislation and implementation plans ensuing from the 2015 Paris Agreement, and a growing tide of public concern about the environment, it is indeed, **very timely** that the Environmental Sustainability Partnership board should publically update and renew its vision.

However, great though the work of the ESP and the resulting vision statement is, given the urgency and enormity of the climate change challenge we are up against, there is no room for resting on its laurels. So, to **further raise the ambition, reach and power** of the partnership's vision and work, I would like to see:

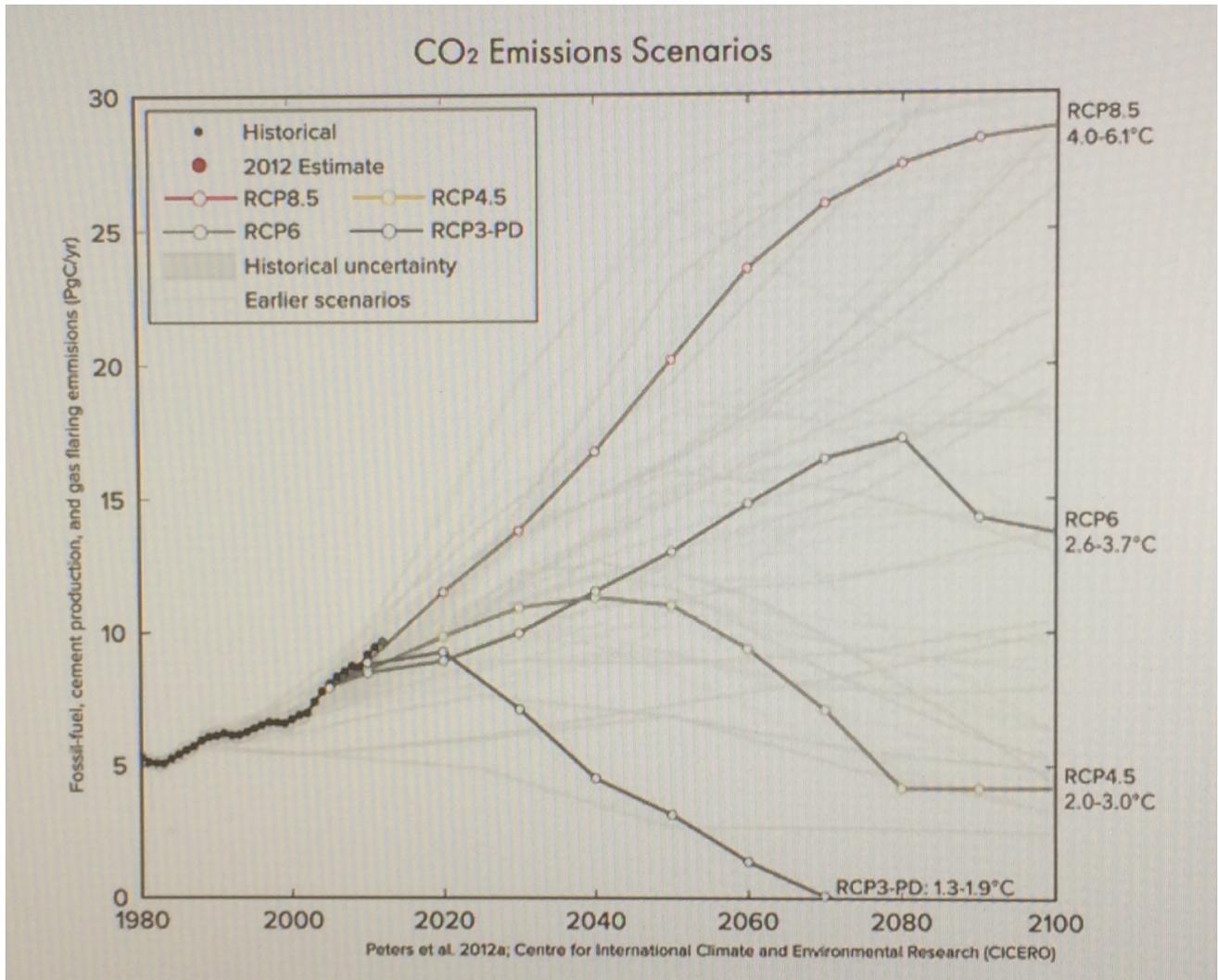
1. **A clearer statement of the purpose and goal in the vision statement**, linked to the CO<sub>2</sub> reduction commitments in the Paris Agreement, the triple bottom line of the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the obligations these imply for our locality;
2. A backcasting rather than incremental approach to achieving this goal, with **more emphasis on the pathways critical to decarbonising our particular locality**, the respective roles in this played by renewable energy and food production, and also the importance of technological and organisational innovation;
3. **More emphasis on the long term benefits of change** and the net benefits of making the transition sooner rather than later;
4. **A stronger evidence base**, incorporating more of the carbon budgeting concepts implicit in the Paris Agreement and natural capital accounting methodologies associated with the UK government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

Although time doesn't allow me to substantiate these insights and suggestions<sup>2</sup> in this statement, I'm very happy to do so with your Corporate Sustainability Officer and/or other members of the Environmental Sustainability Partnership Board.

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delivering lasting value to Government, Business, and Communities.*



<sup>1</sup> Whilst scientists are uncertain as to exactly how and when cumulative CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will make the global climate unsafe, the evidence surrounding the dangers of our current trajectory is irrefutable. Consequently, the 2015 Paris Agreement made commitments to hold the increase in the Earth's temperature caused by human activity to less than 2 degrees centigrade and to pursue efforts to reduce it to 1.5 degrees. But as the Earth's temperature is already 1.2 degrees above pre-industrial levels, as illustrated below, there is not much time left!



<sup>2</sup> Improvements to the May 2018 Draft Vision Statement might include:

- (i) Insert a "goals and purpose" paragraph before the "Key objectives" section;
- (ii) Adding an additional objective in "Key objectives" around facilitating innovation and enhancing productivity. Note that the reason the "the pursuit of a low carbon economy" has assumed a more prominent role in the UK government's 2017 Industrial Strategy (as observed in paragraph 4.1 of the Corporate Sustainability Officer's report), is as much to do with the potential that lies within it for enhancing productivity and growth, than it is with climate change. (Whilst this may seem a semantic difference, when it comes to winning hearts and minds, language matters.)
- (iii) Strengthen the penultimate bullet point in "Key objectives", for example by making reference to biodiversity and climate resilient land use as well as "beauty of the local natural environment";
- (iv) Improve the wording of the "Enabling Partnerships, Strategies & Action Plans" section, such that the list does not read as if it is an exhaustive one, or suggest that the sustainability plans of private businesses or community groups are less important than those of the Council and its key partners. Indeed the input of local businesses, industry and finance will be critical to scaling up the response and creating both head winds and tail winds of change this agenda requires.