

Anthony Simpson statement

After addressing the climate emergency head-on, I want you to imagine that Bath and North East Somerset has fully transitioned to genuinely sustainable, climate friendly plant based diets.

Then imagine someone then comes to a council meeting like this one and asks for you to support a motion to return to a UK diet with meat, dairy and other animal produce.

The council would need to weigh up the evidence and arguments for this. So what difference would it make?

Well, the constituency is 135 squares miles in size. We would need to clear half of this to put the animals on. We then would need to clear another 10% to grow crops to feed to the animals. So 60% - 80 sq. miles of our local land is needed for this purpose. This would wipe out the majority of local natural habitats including woodlands. And this extraordinary land clearance would extend abroad to places such as South America where much of the animal feed would be grown.

It would quadruple our greenhouse gas emissions from food. A family eating a plant-based diet saves more greenhouse gas emissions than another family with solar, an electric car and a heat pump put together.

A lamb curry has over 10 times the greenhouse emissions of a chick pea curry.

Our water would deteriorate greatly. Run off from animal manure once again becomes one of the largest pollutants in our rivers.

Our diets become about 25% more expensive, and instances of heart disease and cancers will increase and type 2 diabetes could double.

Of course no council would agree to this idea – to increase greenhouse gas emissions, devastate the majority of our land wiping out the majority of our wildlife, and increasing water pollution and health issues.

However, today 60% of Bath and North East Somerset land is taken up for this purpose leaving less than 5% of our land remaining for woodlands.

The majority of these numbers come from Oxford University – and all from academic research.

The BANES Plant Based Council community group also support the 'Rights of Nature' motion put forward today. Animal agriculture has been the driver of historical deforestation in the UK leaving us one of the most nature depleted countries in the world. A shift to plant-based diets enables the opportunity for the UK to quadruple our woodlands and other natural habitats without competing with providing nutritious food for us all.

I know that our Councillors are serious about the climate crisis. I therefore hope we can be open to the UK's world leading research on this topic rather than allowing the daily barrage of misinformation to undermine our actions and prevent us from taking the action so desperately required to create a hopeful and positive future.

I therefore ask the council to allow time for a longer presentation of the evidence to consider this more carefully.

I would then ask our Councillors to show courage and leadership by calling on the national government to support the transition towards a plant-based food system.

THE END