

At its most basic level the Liberal Democrat Group supports the 5 issues raised in the Climate Commission letter.

From the outset we have been enthusiastic supporters both of the creation of the Commission and of its recommendations. We see a great synergy between the recommendations and actions arising from the Commission and those from the Edinburgh Poverty Commission and are keen to ensure that our response to the implementation of both is urgent and co-ordinated.

So, in relation to your point 1, we renew our commitment to the 2030 net zero goal and the implementation of the 2030 climate strategy, the mobility plan and the city plan. (While we have some concerns about details of the city plan and the mobility plan we are supportive of the main thrust). We are also mindful that there are significant funding gaps and gaps in technology which would be required to meet the ambitious target but are committed to seeking solutions and maintaining the urgent approach to this.

In relation to point 2 we are of course supportive. Our manifesto includes a focus on active travel and public transport. Connectivity, in particular with the areas on the outskirts, which are not currently well served by buses, trams or trains is crucial to minimise car use and we have championed this aspect throughout the last 5 years. We also support extending the Low Emission Zone city-wide in relation to buses and HGVs to encourage cleaner air as well as additional park and ride facilities on the outskirts linked to good public transport to discourage car use in the city.

In relation to point 3 we continue to support energy efficiency within the council's own estate (recognising that some buildings are difficult to retrofit) and have been very supportive of the new Waterfront Development being as sustainable as possible. The greatest issue is likely to be persuading private owners to switch to more sustainable heating systems and to invest in insulation. Whilst we are keen to champion this we recognise that the scale and cost of this will require action from central government (probably both Holyrood and Westminster).

The importance of the transitional phase is massive. At a time when households are facing enormous financial pressures it is important that this vital work is not seen as something only for the wealthy, and that the benefits in terms of jobs, health, improved lifestyle and, we hope, reduced bills in certain areas can be shown to benefit all – especially those who are most marginalised. In order to meet the ambitious target we need buy in from the population at large, which needs both leadership (from all partners) and practical demonstrations of the value of moving at such a fast pace to the target we all share.

In relation to point 5 we have seen a magnificent response from our communities during the Covid pandemic. There is tremendous energy and talent in our communities. We are committed, not only to developing the 20 minute neighbourhood approach, but to empowering local communities to take decisions about their area, with budgets available. In addition we see the enormous value of the Third Sector (volunteer and voluntary organisations) in developing jointly with the council and other partners more resilient and sustainable communities which should be able to focus more on preventing problems arising, rather than fixing issues only when they have become crises.

Thanks so much for the opportunity to respond.

Robert Aldridge

Lib Dem Group Leader on City of Edinburgh Council