

## DEPUTATION 2 – LEEDS CLIMATE ACTION COALITION

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Could you make your speech, please, which should be no longer than five minutes and could you begin by introducing first of all yourself and then members of your delegation.

MR S BOWENS: Good afternoon. My name is Simon Bowens and I am from Friends of the Earth but I represent today the Leeds Climate Action Coalition. To my right I have Gavin McNaughton, who is a member of the Roundhay Environmental Action Programme; Lorna Arblaster, to my left; and Nigel Jones, to my left. Shall I start? Yes.

My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, we have been working as a group collaboratively for several years now with Members from all parties and officers towards achieving the Council's commitment to reduce the city's carbon emissions by 40% by 2020. We welcome this commitment and the excellent work done by the Sustainable Development Unit to develop a strategy for implementation.

Action to tackle climate change, fuel poverty and energy security must combine central Government policy with local action co-ordinated through strong, ambitious civic leadership. With over 30% of carbon emissions in Leeds coming from our homes and over 65,000 households living in fuel poverty, this action needs to address our energy use and how we generate our energy in the first place.

The Council's commitment to tackle energy efficiency is welcome. The Wrap Up Leeds Scheme will not only address carbon emissions and fuel poverty but will boost the city's resilience to rapidly increasing energy prices. Energy costs make up 10% of the city region's GDP, a figure likely to rise to at least 15% by 2022.

Locally generated energy has grown massively in the last two years, mainly coming from the rapid growth in solar photovoltaics by nearly a thousand families incentivised by the Feed In Tariff Scheme. A scheme whereby residents can claim 43p per kilowatt hour generated has led to greater resilience to energy prices, the installation of over three megawatt of renewable energy and a significant growth in this innovative sector of the local economy.

Within a ten mile radius of this building 64 companies are now registered to fit solar panels. All were expanding, creating new jobs and building new skills, creating wealth for the local economy. The Feed In Tariff Scheme gave an opportunity to the Council to install solar panels on 5,000 of the Council's housing stock, delivering free electricity for many of our city's most vulnerable residents, providing resilience against last autumn's double digit energy price rises and generating a revenue stream enabling the Council to improve the energy efficiency of our city's homes.

Then in October the Government announced plans to reduce the Feed In Tariff for solar PV by over 50%, with the changes becoming effective within six weeks. These changes sent the industry into a tail spin. Previously financially viable schemes became unaffordable and these bright new business ventures face the prospect of issuing redundancy notices in the weeks before Christmas.

The Council's initiative to tackle fuel poverty in our own city is now in tatters as the financial case for the Feed In Tariff's case has been destroyed. Friends of the Earth, along with two solar installers, has taken the Government to court over the retrospective nature of this consultation and we await the decision of the Appeal Court.

Nobody is proposing that the Feed In Tariff for solar PV should be maintained at the current level. We have seen a 30% reduction in the costs of installation since the inception of the scheme. Tariff reductions should be made at that level with further reductions in line with costs. Particular dispensation should be made for social housing and community schemes where the revenue generated is used for social good. Leeds City Council's plans would come under this community tariff. A minimum tariff of 31 pence per kilowatt hour would enable Leeds City Council to deliver this important programme.

We ask that the Executive Board require Leeds City Council to resurrect the scheme should further tariff changes or funding opportunities enable this to be done as a cost-neutral scheme.

The Green Deal Energy Company obligation and Renewable Heat Incentive, all due to be introduced this year, address the 50% of our domestic energy use which is used to heat our homes. Combining an effective energy efficiency programme to reduce heat loss from our homes with the deployment of new technology, such as ground and air source heat pumps across the city will reduce energy bills and fuel poverty, create new jobs and new skills and reduce carbon emissions and energy dependency.

We ask that Leeds City Council moves quickly to maximise the use of these Government initiatives.

The recent mini-Stern report for Leeds City Region demonstrated that significant investment in energy efficiency and the low carbon economy would pay for itself very quickly, bringing enormous economic, social and environmental benefits.

An opportunity like this requires joined-up action between all parties and all Council departments to ensure that Leeds is a thriving, sustainable city fit for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In summary, we ask three things. The Executive, together with other Councils across the city region, increases dialogue with central Government to press the case for a higher Community Feed In Tariff. We ask that Leeds City Council investigates all potential sources of funding from these and act with urgency to use them to reduce energy use, bills and carbon across the city.

THE LORD MAYOR: Simon, could you move to your final statement, please?

MR S BOWENS: Yes. Finally, we ask that Leeds City Council's Corporate Leadership Team sees this opportunity as a strategic initiative and ensures that all departments fully participate in making it happen. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Loblely.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: (*A vote was taken*) CARRIED. Simon, thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon, thank you.