Climate emergency planning and facing up to climate reality:
a strategic vision for Green House over the next three years

1. Introduction

At Green House's annual Summer Gathering held in July 2019, those present reviewed the think-tank's achievements over the recent period up to and including the launch of the book *Facing Up to Climate Reality*, and considered their implications for our strategy going forward. This document has been produced on the basis of that discussion and subsequent consideration and agreement by the whole core group.

2. Where are we coming from?

The work of Green House over the coming three-year period will build on the ideas and positions set out in its recent work on facing up to climate reality (2019)[1], envisioning a post-growth Britain (2015)[2] and indicating the jobs which could be created across the UK in facing up to the climate emergency (2016-2019)[3].

Extinction Rebellion (XR) and the school strikes are at last creating a momentum for urgent action on climate change in the UK and elsewhere. But, understandably, neither has explored in detail how we are to deliver the changes needed. In the closing months of 2019:

- The UK government has legislated for zero carbon by 2050 following publication of a plan to achieve this by its independent Committee on Climate Change[4] but is yet to make changes to its current economic planning (including continued expansion of airports and global trade, exploitation of onshore oil and gas, non-zero carbon development) to reflect this commitment. Also, the UK has so far failed to acknowledge its responsibility to reduce the additional carbon emissions of its consumption, due to the embedded carbon in its imports, and its contribution to global trade (through aviation and shipping).
- Many local councils across the UK have declared a commitment to eliminate carbon emissions in the areas they represent to zero by 2030, although XR, climate economists and others[5] still argue that a deadline of 2025 is needed.

3. What would climate emergency planning that *faced up to climate reality* look like?

In the face of these different levels of ambition, what might climate emergency planning *sufficient to the dangers* actually involve? Suggested criteria emerging from Green House's recent work include:

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[1] Foster, J (Ed) (2019) Facing up to Climate Reality: Honesty, Disaster and Hope. https://www.greenhousethinktank.org/fucr-book.html

[2] Blewitt, J and Cunningham, R (Eds) (2014) The Post-Growth Project: How the End of Economic Growth Could Bring a Fairer and Happier Society. https://www.greenhousethinktank.org/post-growth-project.html#

[3] https://www.greenhousethinktank.org/climate-jobs.html

[4] https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Net-Zero-The-UKs-contribution-to-stopping-global-warming.pdf

[5] Jackson, T (2019) Zero Carbon Sooner. https://www.cusp.ac.uk/themes/aetw/zero-carbon-sooner/

- Recognising and confronting the realities of now-inevitable climate-driven disasters, and the requirement to meet this future through revolutionary transformation if we are to avoid catastrophe.
- Avoiding a focus on climate change as a stand-alone challenge, but rather seeing it as part of a wider environmental crisis, one which is bound up with the crisis in biodiversity, the multiple impacts of our, still growing physical ('built') environment, and ultimately has its roots in our relationship with the natural environment.
- Responding quickly enough for the UK, and all countries, to stay within our carbon budgets in a fair way. Tim Jackson (2019) notes this would require a linear reduction to achieve zero carbon by 2025 in the UK, or exponential reductions (faster initial cuts) leading to 95% carbon reductions by 2030.
- Embedding adaptation in our plans for rapid elimination of carbon emissions. This will require resilience to weave our mitigation and adaptation into one flexible process that strengthens community resilience. This is what is referred to as Transformational Adaptation (Lonsdale et al, 2014)[6] and it also involves elements of what has been called Deep Adaptation. (Bendell, 2018).

The most vitally pressing question of our time is therefore now: what actions would be required at the local, national and global levels, in order for us to have any realistic hope of meeting these criteria? ***What is really needed for this unprecedented social, economic and cultural transformation?***

4. Framing the issues

As a think-tank, Green House's approach to this question will include undertaking or commissioning work (reports, seminars, conferences, research projects…) aiming to offer national policy-makers, businesses, local authorities, Transition Towns, social movements, political parties and relevant others a set of answers. These are likely to include (but will not be limited to) ways of addressing:

- transformations of economic thought needed to embed a long-term perspective, accepting the risk of a large and sudden collapse in the economy;
- investment in net-zero greenhouse gas technologies and circular economy needed to cease growth in GHG concentrations and mineral resource extraction by the earliest possible date;
- promotion of adaptation and resilience in infrastructure and economic activity adequate to the reality of the oncoming climate emergency.

Moreover, a commitment to *transformative* change requires us to engage in an open-ended exploratory-creative process, in which as many relevant stakeholders as possible are induced to collaborate, aimed at identifying what would actually be needed for a sufficient climate

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[6] Lonsdale, K., Pringle, P. & Turner, B. 2015. Transformative adaptation: what it is, why it matters & what is needed. UK Climate Impacts Programme, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK. https://ukcip.ouce.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/PDFs/UKCIP-transformational-adaptation-final.pdf

emergency response at any given level. Through this process we will be making the argument that critical for all such responses would be their:

- extending to significant changes in patterns of land-use;
- significantly altering the scale of consumption and the size of the economy, including a complete rethinking of our present transport arrangements;
- leading through creating employment not infrastructure, which will conflict with some current trends in the economy such as automation and the gig economy;
- embedding adaptation and increased resilience alongside cutting emissions; and
- including changes to governance at both local and national levels
- involving educational and cultural change.

5. Strategic vision

Green House's principal focus over the coming three years (an absolutely crucial period for any real response to Extinction Rebellion and similar manifestations to take off) will therefore be on *facilitating, in the above ways and wherever we can, an adequate response along these lines to the climate emergency*.

This means that, where issues of prioritisation arise and in order most effectively to husband the organisation's limited resources, we will test proposed activities against the question how far they contribute to the facilitation of plans and other responses to the climate emergency which genuinely face up to climate reality.