

North Somerset Council Executive 17 July 2024 – Public address

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Executive Committee this evening to raise my concerns regarding food security.

As the UK is becoming increasingly less self sufficient in its food security surely we should be protecting our farms, and if possible increasing them.

North Somerset Council has declared both a Climate and a Nature emergency. As we know, farming, and hence our food security, depends on nature and the climate to enable farmers to grow our food.

Government and North Somerset Council have said that '*Farmers are encouraged to diversify their activities and supplement their income from enterprises other than normal food production.*' I believe that this poses a significant threat to our food security and our related health and well-being.

If councillors believe that there is a climate emergency then you must agree that our local food is at risk from weather extremes.

To protect our essential food sources at the highest level, I ask that North Somerset Council calls a Food Security Emergency which means that all food production is prioritized and protected at the highest level, for example, in line with the government's 13 Critical Infrastructure Sectors. This is urgently requested, especially in light of the imminent Local Plan consultation and submission.

Along with the declared climate and nature emergency, land is also under attack from the new government's required increase in house building; along with a 10% increase in biodiversity net gain on planning applications and escalating renewable energy projects.

All of these government related initiatives require land, which risks our food security at the local and national level. There is also a threat of war that will have an unknown negative effect on food provision and supply chains, both within the country and from abroad.

Has North Somerset Council assessed the current and future risk to our food production in relation to its declared climate and nature emergency, and related policies? Has the council analysed our region's food production over the last 5, 10, 20 years and our food needs into the future? Where will our food come from if there are less animals or crops in the fields?

What will we be eating, what will happen to our rural communities and associated jobs; and what will be the future for our children's health as a consequence? I would assume that appropriate risk analyses have been undertaken before declaring a Climate and or Nature Emergency and before implementing any policies, and so I would appreciate a copy of these assessments.

Considering the significant risk that a declared climate and nature emergency poses to our food production, I ask that North Somerset Council immediately call a Food Security Emergency, to prioritise and protect our food production and our health at the highest level

I look forward to discussing this further with you in the near future.

Thank you

(NSC Video at 13:55 mins at <https://www.youtube.com/live/IJAInS6Qg>)