

# Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 30 November 2021

## Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty – Response to Motion by Councillor Burgess

Item Number	
Executive/routine	Executive
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### 1. Recommendations

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It is recommended that the Policy and Sustainability Committee:

- 1.1 Consider the information provided on how the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty may impact the City of Edinburgh Council and determine if the Council should endorse the Treaty.

**Stephen S. Moir**

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## Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty – Response to Motion by Councillor Burgess

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report outlines the implications for the City of Edinburgh Council should they endorse the call for a [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#): a global initiative to phase out fossil fuels and support a just transition.
- 2.2 This report has been written in response to a motion by Cllr Burgess on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021, see Motions and Amendments 8.8:  
<https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=150&MeetingId=5601>

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 The proposed Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FF-NPT) aims to align fossil fuel production with the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C warming threshold by dealing with emissions at source: phasing out fossil fuel production and aiming to fast-track progress towards safer and more cost-effective alternatives, supporting international cooperation in three main areas – non-proliferation, global disarmament and a peaceful, just transition.
- 3.2 The Treaty's structure is based on the 'Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons' (NPT) which is based on three key elements: non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful use of nuclear energy.
- 3.3 The main cause of the climate emergency is the burning of fossil fuels. Fossil fuels are the largest contributor to global climate change, accounting for over 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90% of all carbon dioxide emissions.<sup>1</sup> [The Production Gap Report \(2019\)](#) outlines that current planned fossil fuel supply expansion is 120% greater than the 1.5 degrees budget. The proposed treaty states

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<sup>1</sup> [Production Gap Report \(2019\)](#) p.6, p.8; Also see [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report \(2021\)](#) p.TS-46 states that coal, oil and gas are responsible for 86% of all carbon dioxide emissions in the past decade.

that the supply-side of fossil fuels should occupy a central place in collective efforts to address climate change.

- 3.4 The concept of a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT) has been peer reviewed and there is a growing recognition among scholars and policymakers that curbing fossil fuel supply (as well as demand) can be a valuable part of the climate policy toolbox. The Treaty is explicitly proposed and recommended within the journal [Climate Policy](#), Volume 20, 2020, [Issue 8: Special Issue: Curbing Fossil Fuel Supply to Achieve Climate Goals](#). Also see Greg Muttitt and Sivan Kartha. [‘Equity, climate justice and fossil fuel extraction: principles for a managed phase out’](#), *Climate Policy*. Volume 20, 2020, Issue 8.
- 3.5 Major cities such as Sydney, Toronto, Los Angeles, Barcelona, Vancouver have already signed the call for a treaty. As well as the Dalai Lama, 101 Nobel Prize laureates, hundreds of companies and individuals have endorsed the call for a Treaty and signed an open letter calling on world leaders to end the expansion of coal, oil and gas. Cambridge City Council passed a motion endorsing the Treaty on 21 October 2021, becoming the first authority in the UK to do so, and Brighton and Hove City Council will also vote on endorsing the Treaty in 2021.
- 3.6 The Treaty supports the existing frameworks provided by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Paris Agreement and aims to supplement these as neither mention fossil fuels nor put constraints on supply.

## 4. Main report

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- 4.1 The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty focuses action in three main areas: non-proliferation; fair phase-out; just transition. The implications for Edinburgh of each of these action areas is outlined below.  
**Non-proliferation: ‘Prevent the proliferation of coal, oil and gas by ending all new exploration and production’.**
- 4.2 According to the United Nations and other organisations the world is on track to produce more than twice as much coal, oil and gas by 2030 than is consistent with limiting the rise in global temperature to below 1.5C. To stay within the Paris Agreement this fossil fuel cannot be burnt.
- 4.3 The treaty calls for the immediate end to exploration and expansion into new fossil fuel reserves to prevent the proliferation of unburnable fossil fuels, to protect workers, communities and investments from becoming stranded, and to avoid irreversible climate disruption. This action will have a limited direct impact on Edinburgh, see more at 4.6.
- 4.4 The UK is preparing to stay within the Paris Agreement and source energy from alternative sources. If this were not the case the Treaty might have a negative impact on general energy security which could have an impact as a result of energy cost pressures. The extent to which this risk would be realised locally as a result is unknown.

### **Fair phase-out: ‘Phase-out existing production of fossil fuels in line with the 1.5°C global climate goal’.**

- 4.5 The treaty proposes phasing-out fossil fuel production by first regulating fossil fuel supply, limiting extraction, removing subsidies for production, dismantling unnecessary infrastructure, defending the rights of Indigenous Peoples and impacted communities, and shifting support to safer alternatives, in order to align fossil fuel supply with the goals of the Paris Agreement.
- 4.6 This action will have a limited direct impact on Edinburgh and its people as extraction and production do not happen in the area but there may be national implications to such a stance. However, the treaty’s endorsement by the Council and growing international popularity will also need to be considered by the Council’s Arm’s Length Bodies, including the Lothian Pension Fund via the Pensions Committee.

### **Just transition: ‘Fast-track real solutions and a just transition for every worker, community and country’.**

- 4.7 The treaty calls for a clear path and a proactive plan to enable economic diversification, implement renewable energy and other reliable, cost-effective low-carbon solutions, and to support every worker, community and country. These actions and aims are aligned with those of Edinburgh as outlined in the Business Plan, 2030 Climate Strategy and the work of both the Poverty and Climate Commissions
- 4.8 The City of Edinburgh Council has identified that not taking action to adapt to the impacts of climate change will have significant impacts on the city’s built and natural environment, its economy, communities and citizens, particularly the most vulnerable. The City is already taking substantive climate action and has successfully started lowering its greenhouse gas emissions, but these efforts may be undermined by the expansion and continued national and regional reliance on fossil fuel infrastructure and production.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 Should the Committee agree, this will be deemed sufficient to be internationally recognised as having endorsed the Treaty.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications from endorsing this Treaty. It is possible there may be some in-kind implications if there is global collaboration on issues that support our 2030 goal.

## **7. Background reading/external references**

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- 7.1 Motions and Amendments (26<sup>th</sup> August 2021)  
<https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=150&MeetingId=5601>
- 7.2 Climate Policy, Volume 20, 2020, Issue 8: Special Issue: Curbing Fossil Fuel Supply to Achieve Climate Goals
- 7.3 Climate Policy. Volume 20, 2020, Issue 8: Greg Muttitt & Sivan Kartha. 'Equity, climate justice and fossil fuel extraction: principles for a managed phase out'
- 7.4 Production Gap Report (2019)
- 7.5 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report (2021)

## **8. Appendices**

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- 8.1 None.