

The climate emergency is the greatest and most urgent challenge we face. Last week's report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was stark and shocking about the trajectory we're currently on and the consequences of inaction.

Government at every level needs to take the issue seriously, and while it will undoubtedly need large-scale changes and national government to lead the way we definitely have a role to play as a Council locally and regionally.

We have already declared a Climate Emergency and committed to net zero carbon emissions in our borough by 2040, and we've set up a multi-agency, cross-party Climate Change Commission to help us reach this goal. Cllr Andy Bowden, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, is leading on this issue and we have also appointed Cllr Mancy Uddin as the Council's first Champion for Climate Change.

Last week we took another small step forward with the short trial of an all-electric refuse vehicle. It is the first time a vehicle like this has been trialled in service in the borough, and over the coming months we will be trialling various new vehicles including hydrogen-powered wagons.

Next week I am visiting Pilkingtons alongside Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram to see the launch of a new hydrogen and carbon capture project, and this is similar technology that will be central to the world-leading Glass Futures project for which site works have now commenced next to Saints' stadium.

In May this year I was appointed by Mayor Rotheram as the City Region's Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Renewable Energy (and before anyone asks, no I don't get paid for it!). I specifically asked for this portfolio because it's an issue I take extremely seriously and I am determined to help make sure the region and St Helens does all we can to contribute to the challenges ahead.

Being a member of the City Region and working closely with Mayor Rotheram gives us a much stronger voice and more influence in the region. As a member we are already benefiting from investment and support such as the forthcoming introduction of hydrogen buses on the 10/10a route, funding for cycling and walking improvements across the borough, Green Homes Grants for homes in Parr, brownfield regeneration funding for sites such as Moss Nook and Cowley Hill and much more. There are also major potential projects in the pipeline such as Mersey Tidal Power and HyNet which, like Glass Futures, would be of international significance and huge for our local economy and environmental aims.

The City Region has already published a Year Zero Climate Action Plan, and we're developing our own for St Helens right now. The City Region is also now producing a detailed Net Zero Carbon Plan to achieve our 2040 target, and it's open for your comments. There's a special young person's survey too, as we are especially keen to give younger generations a voice. Please tell us what you think and have your say. You can find out more at www.sthelenslabour.org/climatechange or email me at cllrdbaines@sthelens.gov.uk for information.

Best wishes to all Star readers.