

COUNCIL – 11 DECEMBER 2024

NOTICES OF MOTION

Submitted to Council in Accordance with the Council Procedural Rules

1 Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

Proposed by Councillor S Corcoran

This Council notes that:

1. The scientific consensus is clear that fossil fuels are primarily responsible for accelerating global climate change, and that the climate crisis now represents one of the preeminent threats to global lives and livelihoods.
2. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report states that it is unequivocal that climate change has already disrupted human and natural systems and that societal choices and actions implemented in the next decade determine the extent to which medium- and long-term pathways will deliver higher or lower climate resilient development.
3. The International Energy Agency stated in its May 2021 report “Net Zero by 2050” that in order to reach that goal there should be no new oil or gas fields, or new coal mines, as of that moment.
4. The Paris Climate Agreement is silent on coal, oil and gas, an omission with respect to the supply and production of fossil fuels (the largest source of GHGs) that needs to be collectively addressed by other means; and that global governments and the fossil fuel industry are currently planning to produce more than double the amount of coal, oil and gas by 2030 than can be burned if the world is to limit warming to 1.5°C and avert catastrophic climate disruption, and such plans risk undoing the work of our Council to reduce GHG emissions.
5. A new global initiative is underway calling for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty that would plan the end of new fossil fuel exploration and expansion, phase out existing production in line with the global commitment to limit warming to 1.5°C and accelerate equitable transition plans globally.
6. Our entire global community will be impacted by the climate crisis. Vulnerable communities, and those who have contributed the least to climate change, however, will often be impacted most acutely.

This Council believes that:

7. New fossil fuel infrastructure and expanded reliance on fossil fuels exposes communities to untenable risks to public health and safety at the local and global levels; and that the economic opportunities presented by a clean energy transition far outweigh the opportunities presented by an economy supported by expanding fossil fuel use and extraction.

This Council resolves to:

8. Formally endorse the call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and make that endorsement public.
9. Call on the UK government to also endorse the call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty
10. Reaffirm our commitment to rapidly decarbonising our economy at a local and national level.
11. Write to the Local Government Association and raise the need for a planned phase out of fossil fuels, and to call on it to promote the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty among its members.

2 Protecting Family Farms and Preserving Rural Communities across Cheshire East

Proposed by Councillor J Clowes and Seconded by Councillor A Heler

This Council notes with concern, the proposed changes to inheritance tax announced by the Labour Government in the recent Autumn budget, which would scrap Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR) on farmland and business assets.

This means an effective tax rate of 20% on agricultural assets valued over £1 million.

Whilst the government claims that the new £1m threshold will mean three-quarters of farms will not be impacted by the change, the NFU believes this is an underestimate and that at least 50% of all working farms may be impacted by the new tax rules.

Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Steve Reed has stated that already struggling farmers will have to “do more with less”. At a time when many farmers in Cheshire are struggling with soaring costs and energy prices, this tax rise will threaten the future of their farms and destroy confidence in the agricultural community.

APR and BPR have been pivotal in allowing British family farms to remain intact across generations, supporting food security, sustaining rural communities, and aiding environmental stewardship.

The Family Farm is an important feature of the Cheshire countryside and this form of agricultural unit is recognised in Cheshire East Council's own Rural Strategy (2022 – 2027) that states;

“There is real economic value in the area’s natural capital and landscape character, and the contribution of farming and land management should not be underestimated or forgotten. It is after all, what underpins our rural character, environment and communities, contributing to our ‘quality of place’, which is accepted as an economic attribute, supporting locational decisions and investment in the area”⁽¹⁾

Unfortunately, despite government assurances that “small farms” won't be affected, recent analysis identifies that this tax is estimated to impact over 70,000⁽²⁾ family farms, leaving the average farming family with a tax bill of at least £240,000⁽³⁾.

Whilst family farms may be asset-rich in terms of workable land and/or buildings, annual profits are modest.

A typical 200-acre arable farm owned by an individual with an annual profit of £27,300 would face a £370,000 IHT liability. If spread over 10 years, this represents 136% of their profit each year to cover the tax bill. At current land prices, successors would have to sell 16% of their land.⁽⁴⁾

In short, this policy compromises the viability of family farms, will force many to sell portions of their land, or close entirely, paving the way for corporate ownership over family ownership.

The Council believes that this tax will have severe impacts on:

1. **Food Security:** Selling off land or closing farms will put our national food independence at risk, at a time when global stability is already fragile. British family farms are critical to ensuring a steady supply of homegrown food.
2. **Rural Community Stability:** Family farms are the foundation of rural Britain and represent the majority of farms across the borough of Cheshire East. They contribute to local jobs, schools, and essential services. Labour's proposed tax risks destabilising communities, eroding the rural way of life, and causing a negative ripple effect across the countryside.
3. **Environmental Stewardship:** Farms cover 70% of the UK's land, with family farms playing a leading role in nature recovery, biodiversity, and sustainable land management. The sale and fragmentation of these lands would hinder conservation efforts and undermine environmental initiatives.

This Council resolves to:

- Oppose the Labour Government's changes to inheritance tax affecting family farms.

- Advocate for the exemption of family farms to preserve the UK's food security, rural communities, and environmental initiatives.
- That the appropriate service committee(s) proactively engage with local farmers and community representatives, to consider what support this Council may reasonably provide to this essential part of the Cheshire East economy.

This Council urges all Councillors to stand with Britain's family farms, to support our rural communities, the Cheshire East "Quality of Place" and to protect the environment by formally rejecting this proposed "family farm tax."

References:

1. Cheshire East Rural Action Plan (2022-2026):
<https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s97674/Rural%20Action%20Plan%202022.pdf>
2. CLA 12.11.2024 '[Family farm tax](#)' could leave hard-pressed farmers paying tax bills that wipe out their annual profits • CLA
3. CLA 2024 October <https://www.cla.org.uk/news/help-the-cla-save-your-family-business/>
4. AHDB 2024 October <https://ahdb.org.uk/news/ahdb-response-to-budget-2024>