

MK News - Paris Climate Summit

In the weeks before Christmas, the Paris climate summit saw a total of 194 countries come together to negotiate for the first time ever a global deal for tackling climate change.

From a local perspective, our city has always set itself apart and in environmental policy it is no different. As part of our aspirations to become a Smart City, MK has made considerable progress towards becoming energy efficient and reduce carbon emissions in line with national and international targets. For example, MK hosts a range of advanced energy installations, such as the Falcon smart grid, an extensive electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and a district heating system, as well as the more conventional renewable power generators such as the windfarm near Emberton.

Even prior to the summit taking place, Transition MK organized a rally in Campbell Park where local campaigners pledged their commitment to reduce their individual carbon footprint and put pressure on the Government to push climate change higher up the political agenda, something echoed internationally at the Paris summit.

Beginning with the targets set there, all countries involved in the agreement committed to reduce their carbon emissions. Put together, these could limit the global temperature rise to 2.7 degrees Celsius. Similarly, global warming is to be kept 'significantly below' 2 degrees Celsius, with countries aiming for the ambitious target of 1.5 C. The final key target agreed upon was for net-zero emissions after 2050, showing an international commitment to decarbonizing.

However, considering the number of diverse economies and cultures present at the summit, certain measures were included to ensure that these targets are achievable.

As such, rich countries agreed to continue providing money for poorer countries, known as 'climate finance', to adapt to climate change and constrain their emissions as they develop. Equally, signatories will review their emission-cutting pledges every five years, and there will also be a system to monitor and verify that the necessary efforts are being made to deliver on the agreement.

By itself the Paris agreement will not keep climate change below levels that pose a global threat, yet it does show a sign of global solidarity and sets the foundations to tackle it. Not just at the international and national level, but at the local and individual, whether it be through recycling, reducing energy use in the home, changing travel habits and the like, together we can make the difference and reduce the effects of climate change.