

Decarbonisation and Local Government.

Purpose

1. To propose a joint statement and programme of work on decarbonisation and seek Partnership Council views.

Background

2. Climate change is one of the defining issues of our time.
3. The current Covid19 crisis has changed our world rapidly and in ways we could have never imagined.
4. Lock down has forced many people to stay at home. Reduced road traffic and economic activities has reduced carbon emissions. The amount of CO₂ being released by humans each day has fallen by up to 17% during the crisis.
5. The Covid19 crisis has also caused unprecedented and rapid behaviour change. Much of which impacts positively on the environment including digital delivery of services, home working, reduced travel, use of technology in the workplace and many other. Many of these steps were previously believed 'impossible' but we now know they can be done.
6. Whilst the immediate focus is about minimising the current crisis, we also have an opportunity to build on the changes and create a sustainable low-emissions society. Without rapid action any temporary gains will quickly be reversed.
7. Decarbonisation and the environment must to be **central** to covid-19 recovery plans.
8. In March 2019 the First Minister launched *Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales*^[1]. The Welsh Government declared a Climate Emergency on 29 April 2019. And on 1 May 2019 the National Assembly for Wales was the first parliament in the world to pass a Climate Emergency declaration. Wales has set an ambition of net zero carbon across the public sector by 2030.
9. To date 12 of the 22 local authorities have announced a climate emergency.
10. Strong leadership and political engagement across national and local government is key to achieving the consistent and robust approach needed to achieve net zero carbon zero by 2030. Local government is fundamental to

[1] <https://gwedhill.gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/climatechange/emissions/prosperity-for-all-a-low-carbon-wales/?skip=1&lang=en>

delivering decarbonisation and particularly in providing local leadership across Wales.

11. Two key milestones and important opportunities to demonstrate Welsh progress:

- The UK is hosting COP26 in 2021.
- April 2020 marked a year since Welsh Government declared a climate emergency and more and more local authorities are declaring climate emergencies.

The public sector continues to be under increasing pressure to move the decarbonisation agenda forward quickly, collaboratively demonstrating leadership and change particularly by ensuring Covid19 recovery plans provide long term ambitious sustainable solutions.

The following actions are proposed:

12. A joint statement (see draft at Annex A) from local authorities, Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), town and community councils and Welsh Government setting an ambitious leadership direction and ensuring all authorities have robust evidence based plans for achieving net zero by 2030 in place before COP26.

13. For Welsh Government to continue to develop and implement a decarbonisation programme of support for local authorities (based on the successful Brexit support programme where support gave strategic direction and tools and information for a consistent approach and excellent communication), in partnership with Welsh Government technical / related policy areas, and WLGA.

14. The creation of a Decarbonisation Strategy Panel to provide strategic overview and collaborative leadership and an essential communication channel.

Proposal is to set up the following:

- a) Political leadership from Partnership Council (or a sub-group of Partnership Council) to maximise political engagement.
- b) An officials level group (representative chief executives, Welsh Government and WLGA, based on the successful Local Government EU Preparedness Advisory Panel) which could report formally or informally to the Partnership Council or the new sub-group.

15. Decarbonisation to be a standing item at Partnership Council.

16. This proposal and Joint Statement create a framework and structure for local government, FRAs and town and community councils, if other organisations also wish to sign they can do so, either now or at a future Partnership Council.

Wider programme of future support

17. Proposals made at paragraphs 10-14 are the first steps on a much wider ongoing programme of work which will need to be undertaken in order to achieve our ambition of Carbon Net Zero by 2030 across the Welsh public sector.

Agreement is sought on:

18. The Joint Statement.
19. The Partnership Council oversight / leadership role and the establishment of a Decarbonisation strategy panel.

Annex A

DRAFT – JOINT Statement:

Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales sets out our vision for a transition to a low carbon economy. Public sector leadership is a key driver identified in A Low Carbon Wales and will require a concerted ‘team Wales’ approach across the whole public sector to realise our ambition.

Wales has committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions from the public sector by 2030, with a particular priority on reducing emissions associated with buildings, transport, and procured goods and services, while using our land to remove at least as much greenhouse gas from the atmosphere as we emit.

In 2021, Glasgow will host the United Nations Climate Change Conference – COP 26. Local government and Welsh Government will use this exciting opportunity to show case our achievements internationally.

To help meet this important and ambitious target, and in preparation for COP26, Local authorities and FRAs pledge to ensuring decarbonisation action is embedded through:

- *Understanding their carbon footprint, in line with guidance for public sector greenhouse emissions reporting*
- *Agreeing to a set of net zero commitments/pledges for COP26*
- *Closely monitoring and reporting their current and future carbon emissions.*
- *Ensuring all Local Authorities have robust, evidence based net zero action plans in place, as living documents, by March 2021*
- *Work with a new Decarbonisation Strategy Panel*

Town and Community Councils reach people and communities at the most local level. They are strongly encouraged to also commit to decarbonisation on the same lines in ways that are proportionate to their activities and circumstances

Welsh Government is supporting this action by offering technical, commercial and financial support to Public Bodies to implement action, and developing a Wales wide carbon reporting tool with input from Public Bodies.

The WLGA have proposed a programme to Welsh Government, which aims to support local authorities and FRAs by providing information, expertise and training, and ensuring best practice is shared across Wales.

Welsh Government will support the WLGA and local authorities to provide sector leadership on decarbonisation. Working together to maximise, resources, develop consistent communications and minimise duplication on the path to net zero.