

## Partnership Council for Wales – 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025 – Local Government Climate Strategy Panel update

### Purpose

- To note progress and next steps for the Climate Strategy Panel (CSP), supported by WLGA's Climate Change Support Programme (CCSP)<sup>1</sup>,
- Progress against the 'public sector route map to net zero'<sup>2</sup>,
- Progress against commitments in the 'Net Zero Wales' carbon reduction plan for Carbon Budget 2 for 2021-25 (see Appendix 1) – in areas of transport, buildings, land use and procurement,
- A forward look to the support councils will need during Carbon Budget 3 (2026-30).

### Key points for consideration

- All five groups have made good progress against the commitments supported by the WLGA's Climate Change Support Programme (CCSP) driving increased engagement from councils.
- Increased focus has been given to engaging councils in interactive training in these areas to upskill and raise awareness across departments.
- Although bespoke support to local authorities is now available through the CCSP to progress against commitments, take up is slow and WLGA will be working with councils over the coming months to highlight and discuss support that can be made available.
- **Progress towards net zero commitments is not uniform and take-up of available support and sharing of good practice needs to be encouraged.**
- **Ownership of driving the net zero agenda needs to be corporate and embedded across all services, not the responsibility of one officer.**

### Recommendations

- **that Partnership Council notes the progress and key points.**
- **That Council members champion this work within their organisations and across networks, accelerating uptake and progress.**

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government has been providing support to enable WLGA to deliver a Climate Change Support Programme since 2021, with annual allocation of between c£300,000 to £360,000.

<sup>2</sup> [Net zero carbon status by 2030: A route map for decarbonisation across the Welsh public sector](#). The route map sets out three phases identifying where public bodies should aim to be at each stage: 'moving up a gear' (from 2021-2022); 'well on our way' (2022-2026); and 'achieving our goal' (2026-2030).

## **Climate Strategy Panel (CSP)**

2. CSP, which brings together the chairs of the T&F groups with senior WG officials, met on 19 February 2025. The group heard updates on the WG budget settlement, Wales Funding Programme, and the CCSP. The representatives of the Land use and Procurement T&F groups presented papers, and the group agreed recommendations including:
  - Land use: Strengthening the group's link with delivering nature-based solutions that enhance both biodiversity and sequestration as key aspects of land management, given the nature emergency.
  - Procurement: Local Authorities to mandate the use of the standard Carbon Reduction Plan template referenced in WPPN06/21 for all contracts above £6m and recommend its use on contracts below this. This will need to be supported with training and communications.

### **Progress of CSP and groups:**

3. Each group reports to the CSP on progress against their respective Net Zero Wales commitments. A headline summary of progress is included below.

### **Progress against commitments**

#### **(a) Procurement**

4. Progress to report on procurement has been as follows:
  - Engaging procurement and social care professionals in two draft guidance documents on reducing emissions in social care procurement and using carbon reduction plans in procurement, which have been produced by Miller Research, with the aims of finalising and disseminating the guidance.
  - Beginning involvement with Welsh Government Energy Service in the tiers 2 and 3 supply chain emissions reporting projects.
  - Discussing alignment with Business Wales' carbon reduction services.
  - In relation to the route map, partial progress has been made but emerging good practice amongst those 'well on our way' needs to be shared and spread before councils can claim to be 'achieving our goal'.

## **(b) Transport**

5. Progress to report on transport has been as follows:

- In November 2024, the chair requested a shared learning paper to capture councils' experiences to-date in transitioning to electric vehicles (EVs) with necessary charging infrastructure (EVCI) and to identify opportunities and challenges to facilitate further transition. The draft paper was discussed in January 2025 and has been circulated to Fleet Managers across Wales for further input across the transition themes. The updated paper will be discussed in the March meeting of the T&F group.
- Keeping pace with Welsh Government developments including from the Energy Service and Commercial Procurement Services on the next phase of the collaborative EV procurement exercise.

6. The above developments demonstrate good progress against the commitments in NZ Wales. They have also provided councils with support to help them advance along the route map, but progress now depends, to an extent, on take-up of the support that is available and adopting learning from across Wales. However, it is noted that a range of interconnected activities are taking place across the public sector, and although positive examples of joint working are taking place, it remains a challenge for the public sector to be more joined up.

## **(c) Buildings**

7. Progress to report on buildings has been as follows:

- The in-development net zero scenario planners for each local authority (WLGA commissioned) will provide capital costs by building to inform strategic decisions relating to decarbonisation options. Before the planners are finalised and published Local Partnerships and AECOM are comparing data sets on school buildings so that councils are presented with quality-assured data and costs and a coherent narrative to support informed decision-making. Welsh Government commissioned AECOM to deliver a condition survey on the decarbonisation of the education estate.
- Receiving updates on Welsh Government support including the Low Carbon Heat Grant.

8. Progress is behind schedule in relation to the NZ Wales commitment to develop a strategic plan. However, used together, the Miller Research (previously reported), Local Partnerships work, and input from Ystadau Cymru will enable such a strategy to be developed.

9. The Low Carbon Heat Grant has enabled several councils to switch key buildings to low carbon forms of heat, with valuable learning in the process. However, the scale of work required is vast compared to the funding available. It is clear work will need to be prioritised and linked to estate rationalisation plans. Good progress has been made in relation to low carbon heating under the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme for new/refurbished schools. Overall, whilst some areas are 'well on their way' there is still a lot more work and investment needed if we are to 'achieve our goal' as per the route map.

**(d) Land use**

10. Progress to report on land use has been as follows:

- Currently delivering bespoke training in a series of Land Carbon Management training seminars on Whole Authority Approach to Land Carbon, Carbon Habitat Management & Land Carbon, and Regeneration and Infrastructure, presented by Netherwood Sustainable Futures.
  - Providing two User Acceptance Training demonstrations on the Land Use Digital Mapping Tool with Costain and DataMapWales. These interactive sessions promoted the tool's current features and gathered feedback for its phase two technical developments in (late) spring.
  - Running an in-person seminar on Strategic Land Carbon Management with Carmarthenshire County Council.
  - In the process of identifying new areas of focus/support to drive the land use commitment.
11. The group has addressed and made good ground on all the commitments in NZ Wales, with ongoing work to raise awareness of and encourage action on land-based carbon sequestration. NRW (represented on the group) are taking forward work on peatland restoration and associated training. Whilst this needs to be embedded in councils before it can be claimed we are 'well on our way', the building blocks are now in place.
12. Although we are seeing this level of progress, it is evident that much work remains to be done with land use. It feels timely to review the priorities for the group, and how we achieve the biggest impact. This would then feed into and be supported by the next phase of WLGA's Climate Change Support Programme, currently in development. The outputs from the training sessions above will also inform the future workplan.

**(e) Adaptation**

13. Progress to report on adaptation has been as follows:

- Supported Welsh Government with the development of the National Adaptation Strategy

- Delivered a Wales Climate Week 2024 session on building understanding of climate adaptation in partnership with Netherwood Sustainable Futures, Powys County Council, and Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board.<sup>3</sup>
- Presented a Climate Spotlight Session on climate adaptation with Welsh Government, which was attended by a range of local government officers and elected members and WG officials.
- New work programme and local government commitments being developed to drive the adaptation agenda across councils and support delivery of the National Adaptation Strategy.

#### **(f) Cross-cutting work and bespoke support to local authorities**

14. Progress to report on wider work has been as follows:

- Supporting a net zero 2030 review by the Isle of Anglesey County Council, delivered by Netherwood Sustainable Futures. The review included an analysis of existing corporate documents and 1:1 discussion with a range of senior managers and made recommendations for delivery over 2025-2030. It is hoped that learning from the Ynys Mon work will be able to be shared with other councils as many of the findings have wider relevance.
- Streamlining Ambition North Wales's earlier work on reducing emissions and supporting biodiversity with North Wales Growth Deal projects into a business case methodology for all local authorities. Training, covering an introductory session and more detailed sessions for contributors and approvers of business cases, was delivered over October and November 2024 in association with Arup and Grant Thornton. Denbighshire and Carmarthenshire councils are now trialling the methodology against specific projects. The methodology is expected to be completed and rolled out in the Spring. In the meantime, a series of meetings to promote the methodology and approach is taking place or is planned with a range of organisations including National Infrastructure Commission for Wales (NICW), and WG's Grants Centre of Excellence.
- Current bespoke support work with Torfaen County Borough Council (developing land use recommendations based on ecological assessments of grazing sites to inform asset management strategy).

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<sup>3</sup> [Wythnos Hinsawdd Cymru 2024 | Wales Climate Week 2024 - YouTube](#)

- ***Please note*** in the headlines below that as net zero reporting is currently spend-based (tier 1), supply-chain carbon emissions (scope 3) increase as procurement spend increases. There have also been changes in measurement practice. Hence the importance of moving to Tiers 2 and 3 reporting for more accurate data.<sup>5</sup>
- Since 2023 local authorities' scope 1 and 2 emissions have reduced by 4%, whilst scope 3 emissions have increased by 14%. Since last year's reporting building emissions have reduced by 4% and fleet emissions have decreased by 3%.
- In the last year within scope 3, supply-chain emissions have increased by 19% (supply-chain spend has increased by 7%), and transport emissions have risen by 5%. Waste emissions have fallen by 65% since 2023, and water emissions have reduced by 66% since 2020.
- Local authorities contribute the largest proportion of emissions to the Welsh Public Sector (43%) with the third highest average organisational footprint (after NHS Wales second, and Welsh Government first). Further breakdown of emissions will be available in the published WG report and new dashboard expected in March 2025.

### **Working towards the 2030 public sector net zero ambition and Carbon Budget 3**

15. In all these areas of work progress, then, is being made both against the NZ Wales commitments that were signed up to by councils and the route map. Further progress will continue to be challenging considering budgetary constraints all councils face. However, some of the measures can save money and/or generate income over their lifetime, as well as opportunities through collaborative procurement, training, and skills development, and these are key messages to local authorities through this programme.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: WG Net Zero Reporting Team, Presentation on the 2023/24 carbon footprint findings, Dec. 2024.

<sup>5</sup> **Scope 1** covers direct emissions from owned or controlled sources including fuel combustion and company vehicles. **Scope 2** covers indirect emissions from the purchase and use of electricity, steam, heating, and cooling. **Scope 3** includes all other indirect emissions that occur in the upstream and downstream activities of an organisation including purchased goods and services, business travel, employee commuting and waste disposal. [What are Scope 3 emissions and why do they matter? | The Carbon Trust](#)

## APPENDIX 1 – Local government commitments

The commitments made by local government and included in Net Zero Wales are shown in the table below.

Net Zero Wales LG Commitments
<b>Buildings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Develop and deliver a strategic plan for decarbonising local authority estate.</li></ul> <p>Ystadau Cymru as strategic lead;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Strategic plan for decarbonising buildings by end of 2023.</li><li>- All public buildings supplied with low carbon heat by 2030.</li><li>- All new public sector buildings are built to net zero standard.</li></ul>
<b>Procurement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Develop understanding of emissions profile of all procured goods and services by end of 2022.</li><li>- Carbon reduction specifications in all new or reviewed contracts.</li><li>- Focus on a number of priority contracts and share learning re. decarb across LAs by end 2022 – to develop a decarb approach to be applied to all contracts by 2023.</li></ul>
<b>Mobility &amp; Transport</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Build on fleet reviews and develop plans for transforming fleet, inc. EV charging infrastructure, all new cars and light goods vehicles ULEV by 2025, reduce carbon footprint of buses, taxis and private hire vehicles to zero by 2030.</li><li>- Grey fleet review to be completed by end of 2022 (working with WGES)</li><li>- Support remote working where possible, at home or in hubs. Encourage active travel and public transport.</li></ul>
<b>Land Use</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Map out local authority land holdings by April 2022 to identify types of land and their potential for carbon sequestration, renewable energy and flood management.</li><li>- Carbon sequestration seen as a core purpose for public land by leaders.</li><li>- Develop 5 year training and apprenticeship programme and peatland restoration to support the supply chain.</li></ul>

## Adaptation

The Adaptation task and finish group, which held its first meeting in March 2024, is supporting the delivery of the Climate Adaptation Strategy for Wales 2024 through four areas of focus:

1. Partnership and Collaboration
2. Service Resilience
3. Community Resilience
4. Leadership