Partnership Council for Wales (PCfW) – 9th March 2026

Local Government Climate Strategy Panel update

Overview

This paper provides a stock-take of local government progress towards the Wales ambition of a net zero public sector by 2030, and recommendations for next steps.

This work gives essential leadership and progress towards the legal target of net zero emissions in Wales by 2050, set out in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, beginning with Carbon Budget 3 for 2026-30 and followed by subsequent carbon budgets and milestones towards 2050.[1]

The LG work is supported by the Climate Strategy Panel and WLGA Climate Support Programme (WG funded). This includes the work of five CEO led task and finish (T&F) groups addressing adaptation and mitigation/decarbonisation (buildings, transport, procurement, and land use).

These groups were set up initially as T&F groups to support LG in delivering their net zero commitments (see **Appendix 2**). Having shown their value, alongside the support provided by the WLGA Climate Support Programme, it is proposed that they become ongoing steering groups to continue to drive and assist councils as work in these areas moves into Carbon Budget 3 and beyond.

Continuing senior leadership support, from Partnership Council for Wales, and from the LA Chief Executives is essential to progress our climate change goals and achieve the wider community and economic benefits and service resilience. The transition to a low carbon economy must be fair in terms of costs and benefits and we are pleased to see the recently published WG Just Transition framework.[2]

Recommendations

PCfW members are asked to agree:

- A continuing mandate for the CEO led Climate Strategy Panel, supported by the WLGA Climate Support Programme (WG funding confirmed for 2026-27);
- That the Climate Strategy Panel T&F groups will transition into steering groups with refreshed terms of reference, and a review when Carbon Budget 3 is published;
- Partnership Council members have a key role in continuing to champion climate work within their organisations and across networks, to accelerate visibility, uptake, and progress.

[1] Wales commits to net zero by 2050, but sets out ambitions to get there sooner | GOV.WALES
[2] Just Transition Framework | GOV.WALES

PCfW members are also asked to note progress:

- Towards the local government commitments in the Net Zero Wales carbon reduction plan for Carbon Budget 2 for 2021-25 (see **Appendix 2**), in the mitigation areas of buildings, transport, procurement, and land use;

- In developing and delivering adaptation commitments (see **Appendix 2**).

LG Climate Strategy Panel update

Climate Strategy Panel, which brings together the LA Chief Executives (who also chair the T&F groups), Natural Resources Wales, National Parks, and senior WG officials, met on 5 February 2026. The group continues to give strategic direction, and discussed:

- Current emissions trajectories towards 2030 and pressures faced, recognising that net zero across all parts of the public sector by 2030 is an **ambition** and the legal **target** for Wales as a whole is 2050;
- Progress being made across Wales and how the 2030 ambition has focussed efforts and accelerated change;
- The importance of CSP and subgroups and WLGA programme in supporting and driving that work;
- The importance of continuing to identify and share practical solutions to overcome barriers being experienced as innovative transition work is undertaken by councils (avoiding the need for this to be tackled 22 times);
- Taking a place-based approach to net zero, including procurement and skills;
- The need to identify skills requirements in councils to address the challenges faced, and to develop ways of working collaboratively on training to meet those needs;
- Refocusing the narrative from net zero to health, air quality, economic and community benefits, and service sustainability.

Each T&F group reports to the Climate Strategy Panel on progress against their respective Net Zero Wales LG commitments. A headline summary of progress is included in **Appendix 1**.

Key points for consideration

- LAs have confirmed the importance of both the Climate Strategy Panel and WLGA Climate Support Programme in keeping net zero a priority and improving its visibility and decision-making within their authorities.

- All five Climate Strategy Panel T&F groups have made good progress, supported by the WLGA Climate Support Programme, in driving increased engagement and action from councils.

- Audit Wales is currently reviewing the progress of public bodies in addressing the main issues in its 2022 report on readiness for net zero carbon by 2030. This report will be published in October 2026. It will be followed by a Climate

Strategy Panel commissioned review of progress towards councils' decarbonisation strategies and plans, building on the audit findings.[3]

- Whilst there is excellent LA work supporting progress towards the net zero commitments, it is not uniform and increased take-up of available support and sharing of good practice continues to be a focus. The ownership of driving the net zero agenda needs to be senior, corporate, and embedded and championed across all services, not the responsibility of one officer or team.

- The current methodology for public sector net zero annual reporting only enables a 'point in time' analysis and not a detailed 'year on year' comparison which would be beneficial for councils' reporting mechanisms.

- This paper is endorsed by the Climate Strategy Panel and WLGA's Climate Spokespeople.

[3] Public sector readiness for net zero carbon by 2030: follow up | Audit Wales

APPENDIX 1 - Progress of the Climate Strategy Panel's task and finish groups, assisted by the WLGA Climate Support Programme

(a) Buildings decarbonisation progress:

- WG's Low Carbon Heat Grant (LCHG) has enabled the decarbonisation of over 90 local government buildings across 18 local authorities, driven by £80 million of funding. Buildings now producing lower carbon emissions, alongside wider benefits, include schools, care homes, historic sites, and leisure centres. This emphasises the strategic important of the LCHG, and every project is a case-study for other councils and public bodies.[4]
- The LCHG is currently open for new applications for funding in 2026-2027.
- WG support through Ystadau Cymru's Asset Collaboration Programme Wales has assisted 47 LA programmes to decarbonise (including renewables) and enhance biodiversity, enabled by approximately £3 million of funding.
- Developed the Net Zero Scenario Planner[5] to give LAs a tool to support councils' decision-making on buildings decarbonisation, breaking down all buildings by cost and by carbon savings to help prioritise action.
- Devised and published a comprehensive picture of the guideline cost and wider benefits, including economy and health, of decarbonising the local government estate.[6] These national findings resources are also beneficial for informing WG policy and spending reviews, and in maintaining councils' engagement in buildings decarbonisation.
- Early discussions with WG Commercial Procurement to create or identify an existing framework/s for local authorities to collaboratively source the measures in the Net Zero Scenario Planner: insulation, heat pumps, and renewable energy; along with battery energy storage systems, and skills for installation and maintenance. There are significant opportunities here for wider economic benefits.
- Join up and collaboration with WG support programmes including the LCHG, Ystadau Cymru, and regional and local area energy plans.

In relation to the route map, the availability of the Net Zero Scenario Planner, alongside previously reported work by WLGA, is enabling work on a strategic approach to progress. Whilst some areas/buildings are 'well on their way', supported by the WG LCHG and Sustainable Communities for Learning programmes, the scale of work required is vast compared to the funding available if we are to 'achieve our goal'.

(b) Transport decarbonisation progress:

- 11% of the LG fleet is now ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV).
- 64% of LG cars purchased in 2025 were ULEV.

[4] Energy Service: case studies | GOV.WALES
[5] Net Zero Scenario Planner - WLGA
[6] Net Zero Scenario Planner – National Findings Report - WLGA

- A shared learning paper with the Fleet Managers' Group is helping accelerate change across all councils and focussing support and training.
- Establishing a focus group of fleet managers to understand individual staff/driver behaviours and influences, with the aim of applying behavioural insights to achieve the desired outcome of increased journeys by EV.
- EV cars and light vans can make real savings compared to diesel and petrol when whole life costs are considered including maintenance and fuel. Vehicle costs have come down, and the car/light van market is mature enough to meet LA needs. Recent case-studies include Merthyr Tydfil CBC purchasing electric vehicles on a cost parity with petrol / diesel equivalents.

In relation to the route map, good progress has been made, but progress now depends, to an extent, on take-up of the support available, adopting learning from across Wales, and a pacier transition. The commitment is for 100% of new cars and light goods vehicles to be ULEV by 2025. It is also noted that there are a range of interconnected activities and opportunities taking place across the public sector which require improved join up, e.g. collaborative EV purchasing, sharing EV charging infrastructure, and sourcing lower corporate rates for (renewable) electricity.

(c) Procurement decarbonisation progress:

- Collaboration with existing networks including south-east and 'rest of Wales' delivery group to identify gaps, barriers and opportunities and support LAs' progress whilst not duplicating.
- Advocating the need for further support from WG including a clear framework / route map and milestones to 2050.
- Considering a collaborative 'Local Authority Roadmap to 2050' for reducing scope 3 emissions and improving tier 2 reporting. This would include alignment with Business Wales' carbon reduction services.
- Communication of the Climate Spotlight Session with Miller Research on WLGA's guidance on carbon reduction plans.
- Case-studies include the work of the collaborations in south-east Wales (Ardal) and north Wales (Denbighshire and Flintshire) on supporting suppliers to provide carbon reduction plans.

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'.

(d) Land use decarbonisation progress:

- 166 delegates (officers and elected members) attended land carbon management training seminars and user acceptance training demonstrations on the Land Use Digital Mapping Tool (in 2024-25), in partnership with Netherwood Sustainable Futures, Costain and DataMapWales.

- Following these sessions, the Digital Mapping Tool's technical functions will be further developed with the feedback gathered, and the Land Use Guidance[7] will be refreshed with the wide range of case studies highlighted.
- As good progress has been made with all three Land Use commitments, and whilst the production of Carbon Budget 3 is advancing, the meetings of this T&F group are on 'pause'.

In relation to the route map, whilst this needs to be embedded in councils before it can be claimed we are 'well on our way', the building blocks are in place.

(e) Adaptation progress:

- LG adaptation commitments were agreed in summer 2025. These commitments cover five main areas: Leadership, Collaboration, Service Resilience, Community Resilience, and Emergency Planning. A work plan to support LAs in delivering those is in development.

Cross-cutting work and bespoke support to local authorities

Progress to report on wider work is as follows:

- A total of eight WLGA Climate Spotlight Sessions have been delivered to-date covering a range of net zero topics of interest. Over 370 delegates (consisting of officers and elected members) have engaged to hear about areas of practice, share learning, and stimulate discussion. Future topics will include public opinion and narrative on climate change, and energy from ground sources and former coalmine water.[8]
- In the first funding window of WLGA's new Bespoke Climate Change Support Fund, to assist councils with specific climate work related to mitigation and adaptation, 17 projects have been funded including two in collaboration with a public services board and national park. The projects will deliver work towards seven climate themes: Cross net zero; Transport; Renewable energy / EV charging infrastructure; Procurement; Adaptation; Land use; and Buildings decarbonisation. The councils which did not apply will be prioritised in the second funding window over January to March 2026.
- An offer has been made to LG Environment Directors to support a small number of councils to implement and profile WLGA's new guidance on carbon and biodiversity considerations in business cases within their authorities.[9]

WG public sector net zero annual reporting

In 2024/25 public sector net zero annual reporting, the main increases in emissions of the local government sector are driven by supply chain spending, where scope 3 supply chain emissions have increased by 24.3% from last year. Small decreases in buildings emissions and small increases in transport emissions have balanced each

[7] WLGA Land Use and Carbon Sequestration Guidance and Tool - WLGA
[8] Climate Spotlight Sessions - WLGA
[9] Resources - Carbon and Biodiversity Integration - WLGA

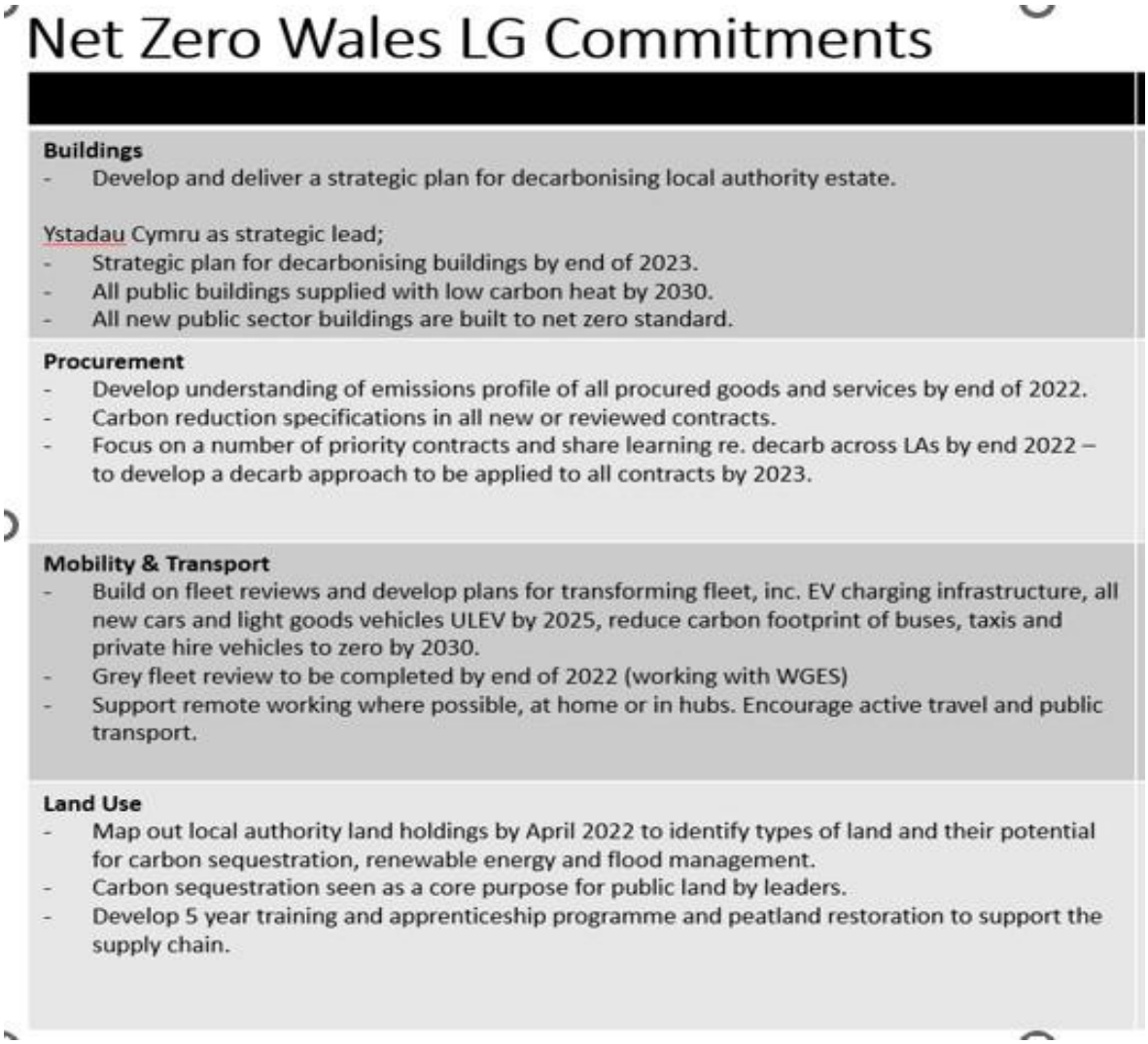
other out. This highlights the continuing need to make progress in addressing scope 3 supply chain emissions.

Conclusion

Progress is being made both against the Net Zero Wales commitments and the public sector decarbonisation route map despite the challenging 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 'green' skills development, and these are key messages to local authorities which continue through the WLGA Climate Support Programme.

APPENDIX 2 – Local government commitments

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



Net Zero Wales LG Commitments

Buildings
- Develop and deliver a strategic plan for decarbonising local authority estate.

Ystadau Cymru as strategic lead;
- Strategic plan for decarbonising buildings by end of 2023.
- All public buildings supplied with low carbon heat by 2030.
- All new public sector buildings are built to net zero standard.

Procurement
- Develop understanding of emissions profile of all procured goods and services by end of 2022.
- Carbon reduction specifications in all new or reviewed contracts.
- 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.

Mobility & Transport
- 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.
- Grey fleet review to be completed by end of 2022 (working with WGES)
- Support remote working where possible, at home or in hubs. Encourage active travel and public transport.

Land Use
- 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.
- Carbon sequestration seen as a core purpose for public land by leaders.
- Develop 5 year training and apprenticeship programme and peatland restoration to support the supply chain.

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